THE FASCINATION OF BRITTANY

L. EDNA WALTER

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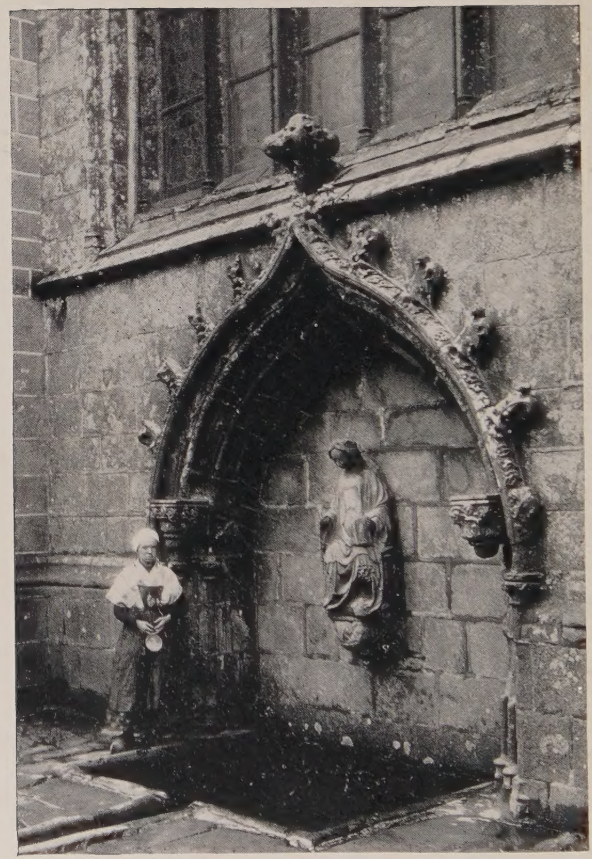

MIRACULOUS FOUNTAIN AT NOTRE DAME DE FOLGOËT.

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THE FASCINATION OF

BRITTANY

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AND PHOTOGRAPHED
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PREFACE

I WISH to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following books: "Les Derniers Bretons" and "Le Foyer Breton," by Émile Souvestre, from the latter of which is derived the story of the City of Is; essay on "Brittany," by Dean Church; "Stonehenge and other British Stone Monuments," by Sir Norman Lockyer; "The French Stonehenge," by T. Cato Worsfold; "A Twice-Crowned Queen," by Constance Countess de la Warr; "Bertrand du Guesclin," by E. Bonnechose; and to the delightful "Land of Pardons," by Anatole le Braz, translated by Frances M. Gostling, from which I have, with the kind permission of Messrs. Methuen, quoted the lines on pp. 18 and 65.

L. EDNA WALTER.

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BRITTANY

CHAPTER I

THE BRETONS

In days long ago the Britons of these isles fled from the annoyance of their unwelcome Saxon visitors, and were received with open arms by their cousins in the Armorican peninsula across the Channel. Now we, the Saxons, flee from our too numerous fellow-countrymen to the same peninsula, to find a little restful peace among the descendants of our ancient foes.

Although the country which we reach is beautiful, it is not primarily the country which fascinates us; it is the people.

When we enter into true Brittany we plunge into the midst of a timid, silent, obstinate, and reserved race, living within itself, possessing a profound belief in the things of antiquity and a lofty distrust in the things of to-day. Its home on an outlying peninsula has enabled it to remain faithful to its own memories and to its own customs.

Local usage, local dress, religious beliefs, and superstitious rites all keep their hold on this people, to whom tradition is dearer than progress and mystery than proven fact.

There is scarcely any other race of humanity which has lived so severed from the rest of the world as the Celtic race, of which the Bretons form part. Passionately devoted to their own race, they have resisted all alien admixture, and have maintained their national character from past ages till now. In face of all opposition they have clung to their old Celtic language with its wonderful folk literature in song and story. In vain did dukes and princes endeavour to destroy it; in spite of persecution and in face of death the Breton kept his speech as he kept his beliefs, till two hundred years ago learned men thought it worth while to study the merits of a language which had survived through so many centuries, and a literary revival gave it a new life. So to-day a million Celts speak, with little change, the same idiom which their fathers used nearly two thousand years ago.

How this race has hated the foreigner is to be seen in the little influence that the conqueror left on them. The Romans may have left vases and coins to tell of their advent, but the Breton shows no traces of their civilization. The Teuton conquered them by force of arm, but the barrier of

stubborn pride kept the Breton free from Teuton taint. All he has asked from mankind is that he should be left alone, that his reserve should be respected, and his simplicity be undisturbed. In the march of what is called progress the Bretons have always been behind, and have been the defenders of lost causes. Ernest Renan says of his people, that "Stubborn of submission and ever behind the age, it is faithful to its conquerors when its conquerors are no longer faithful to themselves. It was the last to defend its religious independence against Rome, and it has been the stanchest stronghold of Catholicism; it was the last in France to defend its political independence against the King, and it has given to the world the last Royalists."

Unfitted by nature for political initiative, the Breton has risen to no eminence in continental politics. To him the family is the unit, and his political organization has been merely that which followed as a natural extension of the family. How little he is interested in outside politics is shown by the fact that he is seldom seen reading a paper. A group of men may be conversing together while their cattle are tied in a row to the church railings, but there will be no newspaper in their hands. Family ties are very strong, respect and reverence are given to the old, and everyone from his earliest youth is taught silently and by tradition

that the honour of the family must be preserved and transmitted.

It is refreshing to meet with a people which does not copy its neighbours, and whose ideas are simple and primitive, but modern France considers them scarcely respectable, and has been struggling very hard to lift them up to what she considers a higher level of society. France, however, has an unwilling pupil, and the old Breton race is standing firm in its silent resistance to an invasion from the most dangerous foe which it has yet had to meet—modern civilization.

The French Revolution and Napoleon may have managed between them to remodel France, but Brittany has looked on, obstinate, and loftily passive. It is true that there are departments and communes made up, with administrative symmetry, of isolated and even antagonistic parishes. Modern civilization, as represented by the Département de Postes et Télégraphes, points to the success of the new geographical arrangement. Are not Léon and Cornouaille, for instance, both grouped in Finistère? But what woman in Cornouaille would buy her dress in Léon, and what Léon man will put any trust in a brother from Cornouaille?

Napoleon tried to adopt one town, Pontivy, and as a mark of his Imperial favour renamed it "Napoleonville." He set workmen to pull down

THE ARCHWAY AT QUIMPERLÉ. *Page* 6.

some of the crooked streets, and build in their place a broad, straight road. But the Bretons still call their town by its old name. In due course the building of the broad road was abandoned, Paris forgot the transient name of the town, and "Pontivy" it still stands on the map.

The middle class, the *bourgeois,* is proud of the name "citizen," but the peasantry, the real strength of Brittany, are prouder of their sabots. Like the men from the rest of France, the Bretons have to give military service. That done, they return to their villages and farms, donning their sabots when they fold up their uniforms. But they are as little affected by their military training as possible; it has no profound influence on their life. There is one service, and only one, which Brittany renders to France, where she towers above her neighbours. She gives to the country of which she forms part her finest seamen. The flower of the French Navy hails from Brittany. Breton seamen were famous in the time of Cæsar, and they have been famous from then till now, in fact the maritime code of all civilized nations is founded on the code of an old Breton port.

The Breton is not anxious to make a big fortune by venture, in fact he is sometimes a little lazy; but while he smokes and talks his wife is busy in house or farm, gathering together small sums, and using these with such care and thrift that a tiny

fortune begins to grow. The women may work beside the men amongst the corn and on the quay, or may form a crowd by themselves in market or factory, but whether in town or country, in shop or field, it is the strong arm and brain of the Breton women upon which chiefly depends the prosperity of the family.

For the last half century the railways have been pushing themselves and the Present into Brittany and the Past. While they joined only the large towns little change was effected, but the light railways put up in the last few years are touching the villages, so that Past and Present are meeting at queer corners. Families going to cure bodily ills at the fountain of St. Anne at Auray will travel in the same carriage as hardy engineers off to repair battleships at Orient, while a company, whose chief aim is that the villagers may convey their produce to the towns, has to make a wayside stop outside Lesneven to suit the pilgrims bound for Nôtre Dame de Folgoet, or at St. Thégonnec, for those who would kneel at its Calvary. The "Pardon" of a local saint looms near in the calendar; the Chemin de Fer de l'Ouest announces in big letters that cheap tickets will be issued and that special trains will be run to the shrine. The railway will cater as much for the pilgrims as for the horse-dealers at a big fair, and the trains will be just as crowded though they run at daybreak.

It is to be doubted whether the railways, or, for the matter of that, civilization and time, have made any difference to the women of true Brittany; distrustful of change, they have kept their faith, their customs, and their dress. They have not been brought into contact with women from the towns. There has been no need for a contingent of women to swarm into a country village for a few months or weeks for the purpose of achieving a specific piece of work. But with the men it is different, and they have yielded somewhat to the pressure of events. Every now and then masons and engineers have been sent down by the Central Government to throw bridges across the rivers and viaducts over the valleys. The long-haired Bretons looked at the short-haired men, and slowly and gradually imitated them. No black hair can now be seen flowing over a Breton's shoulder; only an occasional old man keeps to the custom of his youth. His baggy breeches, too—the famous *bragou-bras*—have been exchanged for the straighter garments of other Gauls.

CHAPTER II

MENDICITY

The *bourgeois* Frenchman of the towns, prosperous in his shop and hotel, smiles at his Breton neighbour, who is content to remain as he is, not troubling, or indeed caring to improve his condition. He feels that in this world nothing matters, and gives his thoughts to the preparation for the next. It follows, of course, that mendicity is recognized everywhere. In the porch of every church are beggars asking alms—poor, wretched, and miserable creatures, often blind, deformed, and diseased, muttering prayers or murmuring blessings as any footfall reaches their ears. Many a rogue, too, prefers to beg rather than to work, and on receipt of a sou calls down blessings on your head with the air of one who dispenses heavenly gifts in return for earthly trifles. Should that earthly trifle, however, be withheld at the porch the beggar follows the tardy giver round the church, until his importunity and the unwelcome proximity of his person extracts something, however unworthy, from his victim. The

PLOUMANAC'H COAST. *Page* 9.

beggar never lacks food. A little girl from the nearest cottage will run out with a bowl of hot soup, or other neighbours will bring their bread, as if it were the most natural thing in the world to share with the poor.

The shores of Brittany are cruel shores to ships in distress, and many a sea-washed village owed its chief support to what the waves gave them from the sunken vessels. Not long ago there were men, too—ruthless, hardy men—who did not scruple on stormy nights to go out upon the rocks with lanterns, and lure to their destruction the ships which trusted in those lying lights. The wreckers had no mercy. What cared they for human suffering? But the roughest wrecker of them all would share his meal or his hovel with a beggar, not because of the beggar's human suffering, but because to this man of old-time faiths he had been "touched by God." Just as it has been with the beggar, so it has been with the idiot. He is looked upon as the "gift of God," is fed and cherished while he lives, and mourned when he dies. The most famous church in Brittany, Nôtre Dame de Folgoët, was put up to the memory of an idiot, about whom there is told this legend:

In the midst of the woods near Lesneven there lived in the fourteenth century, lonely as a sparrow, a poor idiot named Solomon, who day and

night gave praise to the Virgin by continually repeating the words, "Ave Maria." His lodging was the bare ground, and his shelter an old tree by the side of a spring. Daily, in his rags, he walked through the streets of Lesneven, calling "Ave Maria, Solomon would eat bread," and returned with his food to his tree, where he dipped his crusts into the spring, repeating all the time, "Ave Maria." In the depth of winter he would climb into the tree, and swinging to and fro upon the branches, would try to warm himself, calling always, "O Maria." For forty years he lived this simple life, known always as Le Fou du Bois, or in Breton ar Fol Coat; and when he died, being thought by the neighbours unworthy to be buried in holy ground, he was placed by the side of his fountain without priest or prayer. But in the night there sprang up from the grave, even though it was late autumn, a lily covered with flowers of marvellous fragrance and beauty, and upon every flower and leaf in letters of gold were the words, "Ave Maria" and "O Maria." The flowers continued to bloom until, the winter having come, they began to fade, and the last leaf having fallen, the people dug into the earth and found the root in the mouth of the dead Solomon. At the fame of this, so marvellous an event, there came together from all parts a great concourse of people, who determined to build a church, as well in honour

of the glorious Virgin as in celebration of so wonderful a miracle.

And thus arose the church, the details of whose architecture are of the utmost grace. Thistles and hawthorn are carved in its strong grey stone, while grasses of stone grow in the crannies of its buttresses and belfry. A screen of beautiful lace, carved in stone, divides the nave from the choir, while five altars meet the wants of the thronging pilgrims.

The spring in which Solomon softened his bread runs from behind the high-altar. It has miraculous powers, and young girls go to it for divinations. They place a pin, *très doucement*, on the surface of the water; if it floats, marriage will be their lot within the year. Through the clear water of the fountain can be seen thousands of pins on the floor below.

CHAPTER III

OLD BELIEFS

The Breton is unswerving in his allegiance to the Roman faith, but the work of the Church in gaining over such a stubborn people was no light one. Paganism was openly practised till a century ago, and it would seem that in sheer despair the Roman Church had to tolerate in Brittany practices which she punished with a heavy hand elsewhere. However, the Breton being won over to Christianity does it thoroughly. Not only is he Christian, but his horses, dogs, and cows must needs be Christian too. When he fasts they must fast, and so there are hungry animals as well as hungry peasants on Christmas Eve. They have their patron saints, too. St. Cornély will bless the cows brought to him at Carnac, St. Jean the poultry at Plongastel, while St. Eloi is regarded as the patron saint of horses. There is a chapel near Lauderneau containing an image of St. Eloi, and at the "Pardon" the farmers arrive in a procession on horseback. Each horse as he passes the image is made to bow in salutation, and his

owner places upon the altar a knot of horsehair as an offering.

Emile Souvestre gives a quaint picture of the adherence of the Breton peasant to this custom, at no matter what cost. An enterprising Frenchman was engaged in building a stone dyke to protect some reclaimed land against the sea. The Bretons were, it is true, slow and contemplative, but at last there remained but one day's labour for three hundred arms to make the wall safe against the equinoctial tide due the next day but one. That very evening, as the workmen were going home, a carter came to tell him that he couldn't come the next day with his team because it was the Fête of St. Eloi, and he had to take his horses to hear Mass at Lauderneau. Another came with the same news, then a third, a fourth —all. The contractor, in alarm, showed them the dangers of delay, entreated them, abused them, offered to double their wages. The workmen listened attentively, followed his reasons, and agreed with them, but always ended by repeating that they could not come because their horses would die within the year if they did not hear the Mass of St. Eloi. The next day the spring tide arrived, overflowed the incompleted work, and swept away the pier as it went out. "That Mass cost me thirty thousand francs," said the contractor, and he had to begin again. This time

he took account of Breton customs, and remembered fêtes and Sundays in his calculations. In due course the dyke was built, and one of the oldest inhabitants—a veritable storehouse of traditions, and therefore of great influence—went out to contemplate it. Before him rolled the placid sea, behind lay the low land which eight months before had formed the bed of a lagoon-like bay. The Frenchman began the conversation.

"You are looking at my dyke," he said. "It is a well-grown child, isn't it?"

"Big for its age," replied the Breton; "but they say that children who grow so quickly do not live to an old age."

"Ah, I remember," said the Frenchman, "that you were one of those who asserted that I should never be able to cut off the bay."

"That is true, Monsieur."

"Well, you see you were mistaken. The sea herself gave me the stone and sand wherewith to fight her, and has produced a daughter stronger than herself who can now laugh at her."

"They say it is a sin for children to laugh at their parents," answered the peasant.

"Any way, you see I have done what I said I would."

The old man shrugged his shoulders as if in doubt, remained silent for a moment, then, stretching out his hand towards the Frenchman's shoulder

with a gesture both respectful and familiar, said:

"You are powerful, Monsieur, but le bon Dieu is more powerful than you are; the bon Dieu said to the sea, 'Go as far as that'"—pointing to the the dunes—"one day he will notice that the sea no longer obeys Him, and then your dyke will have to give way before His will."

"But how do you know, mon père, whether le bon Dieu has not given me the bay Himself?"

The peasant shook his head.

"Monsieur, le bon Dieu does not sell what is His," he said gravely; "this is land stolen from the sea, and what is stolen will not prosper."

A few months later a great storm swept the coast during one night, and when morning came only the ruins of the costly digue were to be seen. Ditches and roads which had been made on the reclaimed land had been wiped out. Instead of the furrows of the plough, there were to be seen only the sand-ripples left by the retreating waves, on which lay the wooden beams of farm buildings and the thatched roofs of the fallen barns. Far out the old peasant had clambered on to the ruins of the dyke, and was standing straight up, looking towards the ocean as though he was rejoicing over the fulfilment of his prophecy and was complimenting the sea on her victory.

The Bretons still keep wild and fearful ideas

about the power of the sea, especially on the gloomy western coast, where their imagination, aided by Nature, gives rise to superstitions of a terrible kind.

Doomed is the man who, crossing the shore, sees a "dead wave." The sea may be calm, smiling, and blue, but suddenly something—a beast, a devil, who knows?—darts out with a roar, seizes the unfortunate, and he is seen no more. One more is added to her carpet of the dead, but the sea above sparkles in the sunshine.

The sea is a goddess to be loved in her beauty and grace, but to be feared in her passion and rage; a fitting deity for a people haunted in turns by her stillness or her anger. In days far back they called her Dahut or Ahèz, and worshipped her with outstretched arms and weird incantations.

They knew how she loved their strong men; they told stories of those whom she held with her arms and who returned no more. There were other stories, too, to be told, when the wind whistled loudly, of forests and cities which she engulfed in the violence of her rage. Truly, she must be invoked and propitiated.

Worshipped she has been through all time, and worshipped she still is, though Christianity has taken hold of the old devotion and turned it towards St. Anne. Still, the pardon of St. Anne de la Palude is nothing more than the christian-

DOUARNÉNEZ BAY. *Page* 23.

ized ceremony of the worship of Ahèz, the goddess of the sea. Even as the pilgrims pass from afar through the woods of Plomarc'h, they say that the image of Ahèz (who has become under the influence of Christianity the erring daughter of a saintly King) has been imprinted on the waters of the fountain, for it was there that she went with her maidens to wash the bright-hued linen.

A church has been set up to St. Anne. It is on the cliffs, with the great calm stretch of blue below it, and on her great day in August a train of gorgeously-clad figures winds along, gazing at the foam-crested breakers beneath.

There is a service in the church, a Christian service, but in the middle comes a memory of the old Celtic worship, for out of the porch issues a slow-moving procession of the "widows of the sea." With candles blown out to signify the death of their husbands they pass, too many to count, with bowed head and moist eye. Ahèz has, indeed, taken her toll of the brave and strong.

After them follows a procession of the men who have escaped from her allurements, saved, as they say, by the intervention of St. Anne. They wear the clothes, ragged and stained, in which St. Anne saw them when she came to their succour. There was once a time when they added to the dramatic suggestions of shipwreck by plunging into the sea and joining the procession in their dripping

clothes. They carry a model of a ship, and one of their number wears the sailing orders, all that was saved from the wreck, round his neck.

They sing with their voices, but their faces are resigned. "How can we help it?" said one of them to Le Braz. "The blessed St. Anne does her very best for us, and we thank her with all our hearts. But while we are shouting our praises to her we can hear the other laughing, down there all the time. . . . And you know, when she has let you go once, twice, take care of the third time. It is not a safe thing to trick the sea."

CHAPTER IV

THE BURIED CITY OF IS

Christianity, too, has taken hold of the Celtic myth of Ahèz, and made her the centre of a moral story. There are many versions of it, as there must always be of a story which is handed down by tradition, and this is the story as told by an old fisherman of Cornouailles.

Once upon a time there lived in Cornouailles a King named Gralon, so powerful and so loved, that he attracted to his Court all the famous men, whether of noble or humble birth, who lived in the districts around. Unhappily the Princess, his daughter, was very wicked, and to escape from his supervision went to live at Kernis, a few leagues from Quimper.

One day the King and his courtiers lost themselves when hunting, and came to the retreat of the holy hermit, Corentin, who, from a cruse of water and a piece of fish, provided sparkling wine and a sumptuous repast for all the suite. At this miracle the King was so filled with wonder that he invited the saint to become Bishop of Quimper,

and gave up his royal palace as well as the town to his use. The King retired to Is, a town of such wondrous beauty, that—so said the fisherman—the French could only speak of their Capital as the equal of Is—that is, Par-is. It was built below the level of the sea and protected by dykes, whose gates were kept locked. The silver keys of the dyke gates were worn round the neck by the Princess Dahut, so that people called her the Princess Alc'huèz—the Princess of the keys—or, more shortly, Ahèz. She possessed magic powers, and called to her aid the gnomes of Cornouailles and Vannes to build the digues, to forge the iron gates, to cover the palace with false metal that glittered like gold, and to surround the gardens with fences of polished steel.

By her art Dahut had enslaved the monsters of the sea and had given to each of the inhabitants dragons, which fetched by piracy great wealth for their masters.

Riches, however, made the people wicked and hard, so that they chased the beggars from their midst and left their church to fall in ruins—unvisited save by the owls.

Day and night at the palace Dahut led a life of revelry. Princes and nobles came from afar, but woe to those, the strong and handsome, who took her fancy! She gave them a magic mask which led them to her, and then strangled them. Their

dead bodies were carried away by a black horseman and cast into a chasm between Huelgoat and Poullaouen, and to this day on dark nights can be heard from the bottom of the ravine the mournful cry of their souls. Let them be remembered in Christian prayers!

Corentin, knowing all that passed at Ker-Ahèz (Ville d'Ahèz), or Kéris, as they called it, warned Gralon that God's patience was exhausted. But Gralon lived alone and neglected in a corner of the palace, and Dahut paid no attention to the saint.

One evening there arrived a powerful Prince. He was tall, clad in red, and his eyes glistened like stars, but they could scarcely be seen for his beard, which covered most of his face. He astonished all by his wit and by his knowledge of evil, which surpassed that of everyone even in that wicked Court. He offered to teach them the dance of the seven deadly sins, and summoned his piper, a dwarf clad in goatskin who carried the Breton *biniou* under his arm.

No sooner had he commenced to play than Dahut and her courtiers began to dance with the frenzy of a whirlpool.

The stranger seized the Princess, tore from her the silver keys of the lock-gates, and vanished.

Gralon, sitting alone in a distant corner of the palace, was suddenly roused from sorrowful meditation by St. Corentin, who appeared with a halo

round his head and his Bishop's crook in his hand.

"Rise, seize what treasure you have at hand and flee," said Corentin, "for God has delivered this accursed town into the hands of the devil."

Gralon obeyed, seized his treasure, and, mounting his black steed, followed the saint, who cut through the air like a feather.

As they passed the dyke, they heard the roaring of the sea and saw the red demon opening the lock-gates. The water descended in a cascade upon the town, drowning the captive dragons on its way.

The horse galloped, but, passing the windows of Dahut, now crying with terror, Gralon stopped, and took his daughter up behind him.

The water rose to the King's knees.

"Help, St. Corentin!" cried Gralon.

"Cast off the sin from behind you, and by the grace of God you will be saved," answered the saint.

But Gralon felt a father's love, and hesitated. Then Corentin hurled her forth with his Bishop's crook, and she disappeared to the bottom of the gulf.

The horse, relieved of its load, leaped forward and alighted on the Rocher de Garuc, where the print of his hoof is still to be seen.

The King gave thanks to Heaven, and then

turned round to look at the fatal city, but Kéris was no longer to be seen. Instead of the Queen of Cities there was only a wide-stretching bay, whose deep waters reflected the stars, while afar off the red demon raised his silver keys aloft in triumph.

Such is the story of the old fisher, but some say it was not Corentin, but Gwennolé, who saved the King, and every year till the time of the Revolution the clergy from all the churches round the Bay of Douarnénez went out in little fishing-boats to say Mass above the submerged town.

When the sea is calm, the fishers of Douarnénez will tell you that they see at the bottom of the bay the ruins of a great city.

The guides at the Pointe du Raz will point out rocks in the bay, on which they say the overshadowing trees of Kéris once grew. There are two ravens which fly continuously along the shore. What are these but the souls of King Gralon and his daughter?

And that murmuring which you think is the wind—no, it is the cry of the lost.

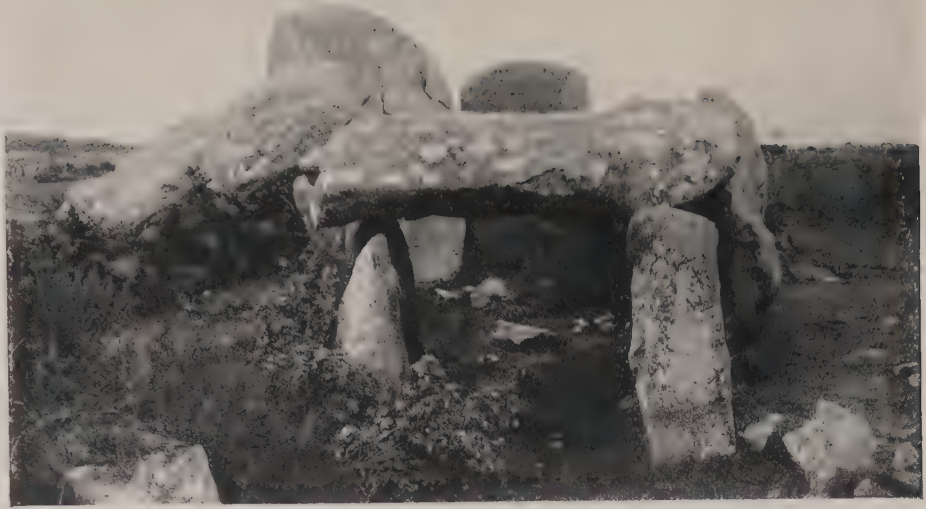
The treeless promontory on which not even grass will grow, ending in the desolate rocks of the Pointe du Raz, "The Region of the Dead," forms a fitting setting for tales of terror. The Bretons have a proverb that "No one has passed the Raz without hurt or fright," and they say a

little prayer when about to pass the point: "Help me, O Lord, at the Pointe du Raz. My boat is so small and the sea is so big." Their proverb: "He who steers not wisely in the Raz is a dead man," indicates what a yearly tale of lives is exacted, and, indeed, the Baie des Trépassés (the bay of the shipwrecked) has well earned its name.

Cambry, who was sent down in the days of the Directory to report on Finistère, said that there was nothing so fearful as the passage between the Raz and the Île de Sein. "The smallest mistake, a false manœuvre, will precipitate you for ever into the abyss or on to the rocks without the slightest hope of rescue."

On that little Île de Sein every family eats a little pastry boat, *le repas de Navire*, on Holy Thursday, to invoke the protection of Heaven upon the fishing-smack to which the family owes its livelihood.

When they hear the far-off murmurings which come before the storm, the old people say: "Let us shut the doors. Hark to the Crierien! The whirlwind is after them." These Crierien are the spirits and bones of the castaways who demand burial, distracted at having been tossed about by the elements since their death.



DOLMEN AT CARNAC. *Page* 28.

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING STONES

The veneration shown by the Breton Celts to all that has descended to them from antiquity has caused them to render one most useful service to mankind, or, at least, to that section of it which likes to take a peep into the times which we call prehistoric. They have reverenced and preserved those mysterious stones which have been bequeathed from an almost unravelled past, and made Brittany a rich granary of primitive monuments. No district possesses a greater profusion of menhirs, dolmens, and alignments than Carnac and the surrounding land of the "Little Sea"—the great Morbihan Peninsula.

It used to be thought that the dolmens and menhirs were built as tombs and monuments for the dead, but Sir Norman Lockyer maintains that, whatever purpose they may have served later for the dead, they were originally erected to be of use to the living.

In these days of clocks and calendars it is difficult to carry our thoughts back to a time

when hours, weeks, and years were unknown, when a man who woke from his sleep could not tell from anything but the heavens how far the night had advanced. He could not ask of a brother, "What time is it?" but only, "What star can you see?" and he had to be satisfied with such a reply as, "Arcturus shines beyond the sacred Oak," or "The Pleiades are appearing in the East."

Such, however, were the days of which the stones speak to us.

But somebody had to know something about the lapse of time, or when were the people to plough their land and sow their seed? The men who knew had all the power that knowledge gives over ignorance, and because of that knowledge they became priests. A priest, therefore, owed his place to his power of reading the heavens; he was an astronomer.

His instruments were very simple—in fact, in some cases they consisted of nothing more than two stones. He had learnt from his priestly ancestors and from his own observations that the Sun-god came back to the same place of rising and setting after the lapse of a certain time, so if it was found that some particular season was of great moment that time could be marked off by noting when the sun rose. The priest had only to stand at the base of one stone menhir, watch

for the sun, and just as it rose order a second stone to be set up between him and it. Thereafter, whenever the sunrise could be seen in the direction of those two stones it could be proclaimed that the particular momentous time had come. The setting up of these two stones corresponded to the "stretching of the cord" which fixed the axis of the old Egyptian temples.

What were the times of greatest importance and moment to the people of Brittany some four thousand years ago—to people who lived on the fruit of the land? The greatest of their necessities was to know when to sow their seed and when to reap their corn. They had tried to do this by watching the moon, but no sacrifice was able to persuade the moon-spirits to be either helpful or consistent; chaos reigned till some early scientist turned his attention to the sun. Then it was found that flowers began to cover the earth in great profusion when the sun rose at a spot which we should describe as 24° North (starting along the horizon from the East). This day, corresponding to about May 6, was a New Year's Day, and the year which it heralded was a vegetation year. The other day, when the sun would be seen rising along the same line, would be August 8, the time of harvest.

The sunsets of November 8 and February 4 would be seen in the reverse direction, and would

give the time for preparing the land and for sowing the seed.

The priest was thus able to instruct his people when to sow and reap.

Since astronomy and religion were united in that far-off time, the important astronomical dates in the farmer's year were celebrated by sacrifice and other religious observances. Great fires would be kindled to warn all the people that their New Year's Day had come, and answering fires would appear on distant hills.

It must have been chilly watching for the sunrise, and the priest must often have suffered from storms, so it was the most natural thing for him to set up, instead of his one stone, a little dolmen, whose covering stone would act as some protection. In this dolmen he could sit and watch for solar appearances in the direction of his distant pointer. Sometimes the architectural design was varied, and as he sat in the covered end he looked along a pointing alley of stones. Occasionally the pointing alley was covered, and the whole gives a primitive suggestion of a temple, the inner stones forming a darkened chamber for the priest, and the other stones forming a rude nave.

The stones, being only used by the priests, acquired a reputation as holy objects, and the darkened chamber was the most holy of all.

There was another difficulty. The sacrifice took

some time to prepare, and had to be ready by sunrise. How was he to know when to begin his preparations in a clockless night? He had to discover a helpful star to warn him, and then he put up another menhir to tell him where his warning star was to be watched for.

When the astronomer-priest from his dolmen of Mané er Hroeck at Locmariaker saw the Pleiades over the tumulus of Gavr' Inis he knew that it was time to be up and doing, and when the sun appeared over the same tumulus his bonfire had to blaze into being. These rough-hewn stones and dolmens, or tumuli, therefore played the same part to the early Armoricans as the Temple of Memphis did to the Egyptians when they had directed its axis to the May Sun about 4000 B.C.

But men and priests were ambitious, they would build a finer temple, so they set up a row of stones, then several rows, and how impressive their rude handiwork was can be gathered from a glimpse of the wonderful alignments at Menec. There in eleven lines still stand one thousand and ninety-nine stones, while the inner holy spot is seen to have extended itself into a circle of seventy. Those are all that now remain as an indication of the majestic simplicity of a temple of the stone age.

It was the need of the farmers and the be-

haviour of the fruits of the earth that made the earliest year a May year with its high days early in what we call February, May, August and November. Later on, however, worship began to be given to the sun at the time of his greatest glory, when he rose several times in succession at the same spot, and rode across the sky by day in his highest majesty; that was on Midsummer Day, and the setting up of stones accurately marking his direction at sunrise was much easier at this time than it was on May Day.

From the moment when the summer solstice was taken as the chief event of the year, since it only happened once a year, men must have been able to find the length of the year in days, and a prehistoric calendar could be said to exist. The religious celebrations at Midsummer gradually overshadowed those which had taken place in the "Farmer's Year," and became so firmly planted in the lives of the people that they have never been lost, and to this day do folks keep holiday at Midsummer Day and light bonfires on the great tumulus which they call Mont S. Michel at Carnac. No modern church has ever been able to destroy these old pagan festivals. She has re-named them and given them a Christian coat, but they remain all the same. The magic powers of the Hawthorn and Rowan may have waned, but the plants themselves are still con-

nected with the floral New Year's Day in May. Although there is nothing in the modern Breton Calendar to hint at a prehistoric May Year, there are in many parts special festivals, now called "Pardons," held at the old quarter days.

Quimperlé has its "Pardon des Oiseaux" and Pont l'Abbé its "Pardon des Enfants" in May, while in August Pleyben has its horse sales and St. Nicodème in Plumiliau its procession of cattle to be blessed, the girls at the same time selling their tresses to hair-merchants. In connection with this, however, it is interesting to note that our Scottish brothers have persistently adhered to the quarter-days of the old Vegetation Year, and when February 4 comes round they are keeping up the memory of the old pagan seed-time festival, notwithstanding that the substitution of candles inside early Christian churches for bonfires without has caused it to be known as Candlemas.

In many parts of Ireland, too, the agricultural rent-year is still reckoned from May to November.

A large number of menhirs exists in the districts round Brest and Crozon. At Lagatjar, near Crozon, there are two parallel rows of huge menhirs starting from a giant stone—now overturned—called the Pierre du Conseil. From the Pierre du Conseil a line over a dolmen near Camaret gives the direction of sunrise on June 21, while from the same stone an avenue points to

sunset on the same day. It has been found that the stones set up to mark the solstitial festivals are more regular in form and more finely polished than those set up in the time when the May Year held sway. They are huge giants, the quadrangular one at Kerloas, nearly forty feet above the ground, being the finest in Brittany. Those in the islands of Melon and at Kermabion approach thirty feet, and all these have been so carefully trimmed with tools that they are considered to have been set up at the time when the stone-age folk had reached their highest civilization. Neither Carnac nor Pont l'Abbé, both of which have the most profuse remains of the May-Year period, can show the polished quadrangular blocks to be found near Brest.

In later periods so many of the dolmens have been used as tombs that it was quite natural to believe that that was their original object. The stones and dolmens which had been connected with the rites and ceremonies of early sun-worship retained their holy character, and became associated with a cult of the dead. One of the earliest ways of dealing with the dead was by cremation. The warrior was burnt and also his goods with him, and it was understood that the more valuable and numerous these were the more favourably did the gods view the affair, and therefore the better time did the spirit have.

CALVARY AT ST. ANNE D'AURAY. *Page* 45.

The ashes were sometimes put upon the earth, or as pottery became known were put into an urn of baked clay. The practice of cremation slowly gave way before that of burying the body (either doubled up or at full length), although both practices lived for centuries side by side. In the dolmens buried under the earth of Mont S. Michel skulls and skeletons have been found in profusion, the importance of the original owner being apparent in several ways. A great hero had a dolmen to himself, and his covering stone was large and massive. It was customary, too, to put with him his personal possessions, or things which it was felt he might need on his long journey into a strange world, so, besides jasper and turquoise, which he would take to offer to his gods, he had his axe at his side and food at his feet.

The stone axes of the early Armoricans seem to have been sacred objects. The Romans during their occupation often built them into their chimneys, for such have been found in the Gallo-Roman remains found at the foot of Mont S. Michel, and to this day when a Breton peasant picks up a stone celt he calls it a "thunder-stone," and builds it into his fireplace as a protection against lightning.

Sometimes a great hero would be buried near the sea, and his spirit attached to a lofty pyramid

to frighten away an invading enemy, though his descendants have learned by experience that for the purpose of circumventing an enemy one live watcher is better than the tombs, or even spirits, of ten dead heroes.

The names in the Morbihan district are distinctly suggestive of the attention paid to the dead, Le Menec meaning both the "Place of Stone" and "The Place of Remembrance," Kermario "The Place of the Dead," and Kerlescant "The Place of Burning." The syllable "*ker*," which occurs so frequently in Breton names, is the same as the Welsh "*caer*," and means "place." Locmariaker is a curious mixture of Roman and Breton, it being the place (*locus*) of Mary with the redundant "*ker*" added by the Bretons.

In every direction are to be found evidences of the way in which the very oldest customs and usages have persisted in Brittany. Women made small bowls to hold the food for the dead, and numbers of these small bowls have been dug up in the neighbourhood of Carnac. At a place called Rieux, not far away, the women still make bowls of the same shape, the imprint of their fingers showing the sex of the potter as it did in the ancient relics.

Some of the lines on the modern pottery resemble the curious tracery on the inside of the

stones of the Dol ar Marchant at Locmariaker and within the wonderful "Gal-gal," or Dolmen-à-galerie on the island of Gavr' Inis, and even the brilliantly embroidered dresses worn by the women on their fête days often show the same lines of decoration—parallel wavy lines, like the zodiac sign for Aquarius.

CHAPTER VI

STONE WORSHIP

It may be wondered why the Celts accepted the holy places of their Armorican predecessors, but it has always been customary for a conquering race to adopt many of the deities of the conquered. The great divinity of the conqueror of course supplanted the chief god of the conquered, but it was thought well not to disturb the small local deities. They, being at home, knew the country, so to speak, and might make themselves very unpleasant if interfered with. So they were allowed to remain on in possession, and received the offerings and worship to which they had always been accustomed.

The great deity of the early Celts was a kind of Apollo, really a kind of Sun-god, for round the circles and lines of stones they danced to celebrate his power on Midsummer Day. At summer's end they tried to propitiate him—for he was more bloodthirsty than the deities of most tribes—by human sacrifices. His reign of long nights and cold days was beginning. They needed corn for

their flocks and milk for their households, and in return "They would kill their piteous, wretched offspring," giving him one-third of their strongest children. Little wonder that the Romans shrank in horror from their hateful practices and poured scorn upon their Druid priests.

Of local or landscape divinities there were legion. The forest had its spirit, the rock its goddess, the lakes and rivers their guardian. Every river-source and every spring had its powerful spirit, who had to be propitiated. These weird inhabitants of his land so affected the imagination of the Celt that to this day they remain with him.

It is not surprising that a holy well, with frequently a holy tree, should be often found in the neighbourhood of the stone temple. The priest must have needed water, in fact, the stone circles and alignments being the centre of ceremonial life—at first astronomical and religious, and then political—water must always have been near at hand.

In vain has the Christian Church thundered against the worship of stones, wells, and trees; annihilate it she could not. She could only assimilate the cult and divert the ritual into her own gates. Various Church Councils tried to crush the *Cultus Lapidum* throughout Europe; Canute prohibited it in England, while in Brittany it seems to have been a trouble to the Church till the last

century. The Council of Nantes denounced it in A.D. 658, specially referring to the "False worship of stones in ruined and woody places, where the people make offerings and pay vows," and specially commanded the Breton Bishops to uproot the stones from their foundations and hide them where their worshippers would not be able to find them.

A large number of menhirs were then cast down, and the French Government has, thirteen hundred years later, been busy in setting them up again. Some of the old Breton priests gave up the struggle against the stone-worship and put a cross on the top of the menhir instead, hoping in this way to Christianize the peasant's ideas. Many of the crosses have been blown down in the course of time, but their supports can be seen, as on the granite needle, known as Pierre-du Champ-dolent, at Dol, which is 35 feet above the ground and 9 feet below.

Even to-day, however, the peasants still regard these stones with reverence mixed with fear, and many are the legends they believe about them. They tell of a terrible race of little black men who inhabit the menhirs, and who, if they can catch you at midnight, will make you dance, leaping round you in circles by the light of the moon until you die of fatigue. And at certain times the menhirs go down to the water to drink, when they mesmerize anyone who happens to be watching

them, and crush him to death in their onward march.

In some remote spots the stones have been anointed even in recent years with a kind of wax, and women have been known to place fruit and flowers at their base in hopes of some resultant benefit. It is almost needless to mention that the great alignments in the Morbihan peninsula do not suggest to the peasant any idea of early temples or astronomy. He accounts for them quite differently. Perhaps they were thrown by Beelzebub from the moon, or brought by the Virgin Mary in her apron. But they are most generally known in the district as the "Soldats de St. Cornely," about whom they tell this story. He was a Bishop of Rome, and, being chased by an army sent by an idolatrous King, fled to Brittany, accompanied only by two oxen, who carried him when he was tired. In due course he reached the coast and was stopped by the sea, while the soldiers, arranged in long lines, cut off his retreat. Death was imminent, and he prayed to Heaven. Immediately the soldiers were changed into stone, and became the three great alignments of Menec, Kermario, and Kerlescant.

The miracle is commemorated by the church at Carnac, which shows above the porch a figure of the good Bishop and his two oxen. Every year on September 13 St. Cornely, in memory of what he owed to his *deux bœufs*, pours blessings on all

cattle. They are brought to the door of the church. St. Cornely looks down from above; the priest blesses them below. The holy well in the neighbourhood furnishes water with which to sprinkle those which are ailing, and few know that they are going to the same well which their pagan ancestors used in connection with religious ceremonies two thousand years before. It cannot but be remarked, too, that the two oxen of St. Cornely are strongly suggestive of the two oxen of a certain Celtic god, Hu-Gadarn. We learn from Celtic mythology that the Deluge owed its existence to a monstrous crocodile. The two oxen dragged the terrible beast out of the water by means of great chains, so that he died, but the effort was so great that one of the oxen perished, while the other died of grief at the loss of his brother.

These two oxen are mentioned in one of the oldest and most singular of all the Breton songs. The fact that such a song should have survived at all is a proof of the persistency of the Breton nature, which destroys nothing and changes so slowly. But if the song is quite authentic, it is a wonderful thing that Breton mothers to-day, without understanding what they are repeating, continue to teach their children the sacred mysteries which the Druids inculcated into their pupils before, and after, the time of the Romans.

GATE AND MIRACULOUS FOUNTAIN, ST. JEAN DU DOIGT. *Page* 52.

The song is of course in the Breton tongue, but has been put into French by Villemarqué, who collected a great number of the popular traditional songs of Brittany during the middle of the last century. The suggestion, however, has not been wanting that Villemarqué sometimes taxed his imagination to fill up gaps in an incomplete version.

The song in question is in the form of a dialogue between a Druid and a child. The child asks his master to sing him the numbers from one to twelve, and the master, in the form of a dozen, answers the child's question, and teaches the child all the Druid ideas about Destiny, Geography, Astronomy, Magic, Medicine, and other matters.

Le Druide. Tout-beau, bel enfant du Druide, réponds-moi ; tout beau, que veux-tu que je te chante ?

L'Enfant. Chante-moi la série du nombre un, jusqu'à ce que je l'apprenne aujourd'hui.

Le Druide. Pas de série pour le nombre un : la Nécessité unique, le Trépas, père de la Douleur ; rien avant, rien de plus.

Tout-beau, bel enfant du Druide, réponds-moi, que veux-tu que je te chante ?

L'Enfant. Chante-moi la série du nombre deux, jusqu'à ce que je l'apprenne aujourd'hui.

Le Druide. Deux bœufs attelés à une coque ; ils tirent, ils vont expirer, voyez la merveille !

Pas de série pour le nombre un : la Nécessité unique le Trépas, père de la Douleur ; rien avant, rien de plus.

Tout-beau, bel enfant du Druide que te chanterai-je ?

So run the question and answers till the number twelve is reached, each answer repeating all the

answers that have preceded it, after the manner of the "House that Jack Built."

The number twelve gives twelve months and twelve signs of the zodiac, showing that the knowledge of the Druids had advanced far beyond that of their ancestors, who had set up the stones.

The numbers ten and eleven give a hint at the Roman invasion:

"Dix vaisseaux ennemis qu'on a vus venant de Nantes :
Malheur à vous ! malheur à vous ! hommes de Vannes !"

And

"Onze Prêtres armés, venant de Vannes, avec leur épées brisées ;"

eleven out of three hundred, it tells us. The Romans had found the Veneti so tough and stubborn, so unwilling to admit themselves conquered, even after defeat, and so ready to fight again, that at last they put to death the entire Senate of Vannes. The Morbihan has never quite forgotten this, and to this day a Breton calls another "a Roman" when he wishes to hurl at him a specially abusive epithet.

CHAPTER VII

SUPERSTITIONS

A curious relic of the old worship of wells and trees still survives, and evidences of it may be seen on almost any Sunday or holiday. Offerings to the spirit of the well frequently took the form of skins and articles of apparel. These were hung upon the neighbouring sacred tree, which was almost always a thorn and most often a hawthorn. The skins were fixed with bone pins, many of which have been found among Celtic remains. Time, however, caused the value of the gifts to diminish, and frequently the pin itself was all that remained to represent the earlier and more valuable offerings. The pin is to-day used in thousands in connection with miraculous waters, as at Solomon's fountain at Folgoet. The idea of its being an offering has been somewhat lost, and it is now generally looked upon as having a sort of prophetic power, especially as regards marriage. So young girls may be seen pushing pins into the little image of St. Guerec, which stands in a tiny oratory on a rock in the Bay of Ploumanach.

The pillars of the little oratory must have been put up somewhere about the twelfth century, and the saintly figure has been much exposed to the weather, for at high tide the sea surrounds the rock on which it stands. What with the attacks of rain, the ravages of worms, and the markings of pins, the life of the wooden St. Guerec reached its limits. Within the last few years he has been replaced in granite, but this makes no difference to the old observance. He receives as many pin-pricks as his wooden predecessor, though they are not so deep.

St. Guerec or Kirec seems to be the only British saint who is not of royal birth. A saint in the Celtic Christian Church was merely the head of the sacred tribe, and was appointed by the warrior chief from among the members of his own family. The chief often found this a convenient way of getting rid of a relative who might develop into an undesirable rival. It was only when no royal candidate was available that the monks were allowed to elect their own Abbot, and he had to resign as soon as a member of the royal family grew old enough to be Abbot in his stead. Guerec, however, seems to have managed to retain his position. He was, it is true, often cut out by neighbouring royal Abbots to whom his followers frequently deserted, and at last he left Ploumanach in sorrow. He was a strong believer in the proper

observance of the festivals of the Church, and on his journey, finding a girl washing clothes on the Fête of Notre Dame, in the country of Léon, he reproached her. She told him to mind his own business, that she knew no other means of earning her own living, and that she had to live on holy-days as much as on week-days, whereupon the saint in wrath condemned her to paralysis.

She then repented and prayed for eight days, after which time St. Guerec restored her to health. In memory of this miracle she gave her house to St. Guerec, who converted it into a chapel dedicated to Notre Dame, and its being in the centre (*kreis*) of the place (*ker*) was known as Notre Dame de Kreisker. That was in the sixth century. In its place, in the fourteenth century, there arose the beautiful Chapel of the Kreisker, now standing in the town of St. Pol de Léon. Its tower and spire are supposed to be the finest in Brittany, and the carvings of its North Porch like those of the porch of Notre Dame de Folgoet, are wonderful.

The pins, which readily fall from the granite St. Guerec, find a more stable home in the wooden crucifix standing in the courtyard of the Church of St. Anne d'Auray. In connection with this it is well to remember how often the crucifix is known as "the tree." The fountain near at hand provides miraculous water, and upon any Sunday in summer crowds of people can be seen courting

cures at its brink. The water will be poured over a wounded limb, applied to the sore neck of a little boy, or carried home in a bottle to serve those too old or infirm to come to its source.

The growth of St. Anne d'Auray as a great pilgrim shrine is interesting. It takes us back to pagan times when every city was dedicated to a protective divinity or "mother." Every year the Gauls held a dedication feast, and the divinity received libations. The practice lasted into Christian times. Some ancient bas-reliefs show the mother as a benevolent lady in a sitting position, holding either fruit or a baby, supported by two other equally benevolent ladies in long robes and also carrying fruit. These mothers were very popular goddesses among the poor, who flocked to their little wooden statues and gave of their little. Christianity failed to put an end to the belief of the people in their Divine "mother," as it failed to put an end to everything else that the Bretons chose to believe. All that happened was that the people buried their beloved wooden images, which in course of time turned black in the ground. Such images were constantly being dug up during the Middle Ages, and were invariably taken to be miraculous figures of Notre Dame or some Christian saint, to whom was naturally attributed all the magic powers of the old pagan mothers.

So when, in 1625, a peasant, Yves Nicolazie, living about two miles from Auray, dug up a statue in the garden of his cottage, after dreaming many times that St. Anne not only appeared but sang to him, he at once assumed that this must be a miraculous statue of the mother of the Virgin Mary. A miraculous image was always a useful thing to have, so when the Carmelites heard of it, they determined to gain possession of the statue and to exploit it. Within two years a regular cult had been organized and its popularity spread afar.

The Bretons believe that St. Anne belonged to their country, was of high degree and ill-treated by a wicked husband, who drove her from his castle to Palestine, where the little Mary was born. After many years she returned, but, instead of assuming her rank, she lived as a hermit and spent her life and her possessions among the poor.

Her name does not appear in any early Church calendars, and, in fact, no one seems to have paid any attention to her till the fifteenth century, so it is little to be wondered at that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries she employed herself in visiting many people, invariably poor peasants, whom she commanded to build a chapel or an oratory. In this way the number of her chapels soon exceeded those of other Breton saints. St. Anne became the vogue, and though fashions

in saints come and go, she has kept her place, so that the "Pardons" of St. Anne d'Auray, July 24, and St. Anne de la Palude, August 27, are two of the largest in Brittany, attracting pilgrims by the tens of thousands.

The image found by Yves Nicolazie was burnt during the time of the Revolution, but a piece of it was saved and built into a new statue of gold. At her "Pardon" the image is carried in a long procession. At other times it rests in a southern chapel in the huge modern church built over the spot where the original Carmelite chapel was erected, and is visited by great crowds on every holiday. The image itself is not kissed, but a silver medallion at the side of the altar receives the salutation instead. The more careful of the worshippers polish the medallion with their handkerchiefs first. Judging by the votive tablets and pictures, St. Anne appears to be a very busy woman. She arranges marriages, cures diseases, restores to life. One picture shows Jean Marie Hervé (aged four) fallen into the mill pond and caught on the wheel. A voluminous St. Anne hastens from the sky to the rescue, and the small Jean is there and then dedicated to the saint. St. Anne's special work seems to be among sailors, and many are the tablets of those saved from peril on the sea.

CIDER-DRINKING. *Page* 60.

CHAPTER VIII

SAINTS OF OLD

St. Anne is only one of many saints Scriptural or Apocryphal who have, since the Middle Ages taken a prominent place in the Church calendar. The Breton, like all Celts, have had a multitude of their own saints, with harsh-sounding names like Kirec, or Thégonnec, or Tugdual. Fine old pagans, too, some of them were, and the Bretons loved them; but the Church of Rome considered them local and barbarous, and thought it would be more respectable to replace them by Italian saints of a wider reputation. The substitution went on very quietly and slowly, but it is, unfortunately, still going on, and we should know little of some of the robust and hardy race of Celtic saints, were it not that a good old monk of the seventeenth century felt a "call" to write their lives. He gained permission, so many permissions! to go about his country and gather material for his work. So he walked about in his brown Franciscan habit, gathering accounts from priests and people, stopping with the Bishop one day, culling

rich lore from the Bishop's own cook the next. He talked in the Breton tongue, was welcomed everywhere, and, being a dear genial old soul, he believed all he heard. He recorded his knowledge faithfully, and there it stands in the quaint simplicity of his old French. Surely no book ever gave a collection of stories and legends more rich in marvel and in wonder! Such is Albert Legrand's "Vies, gestes, mort et miracles des Saints de la Bretagne Armorique," written in 1636 and reprinted many times, even as recently as 1901. From this book we learn that in the eighth century a certain royal youth named Mériadec refused to take part in the pleasures and follies of Court life and preferred the Church. Being royal, he rapidly rose to be Abbot, but insisted upon giving up all his distinguished ecclesiastical posts, selling his patrimony and retiring to a solitary spot not far from Pontivy. He was in time dragged by force from his hermitage and made Bishop of Vannes, where Albert describes him as "compassionate and merciful towards the poor and afflicted, austere to himself, but kind and benign to his neighbours." After his death miracles were performed at his tomb in the cathedral and also at his hermitage at Stival, where a church soon reared its walls and was dedicated to him. Many other churches bore his name, among which is to be noted the Chapel of St. Mériadec in the parish of Plougaznou. He

was so much loved that the valley round was called after him "Troun Mériadec."

Now it chanced that in the fifteenth century a young man from Plougaznou doing service in Normandy became a devoted worshipper of a relic of St. John the Baptist which had been saved from the burning of St. John's body in Samaria and taken to Normandy. As he was giving the Finger his last adoration before returning to Brittany, he felt a sudden exaltation and, during his homeward walk, so says Monk Albert, trees bowed down on his approach, and the bells of all the churches rang as he passed. Arrived at Plougaznou, his first act was to go to the Chapel of St. Mériadec. There, as he was kneeling before the altar, he felt something suddenly leave his arm and, looking down, he beheld an open wound. Upon the altar, however, there rested his beloved Finger. It had hidden itself in his arm in Normandy so that it could, undetected, accompany him back to Plougaznou. Whether these explanations would have satisfied a Norman Court of Law is doubtful, but it was enough for the Bretons. Besides, did they not possess the relic?

The priests of St. Mériadec were just yearning for a relic. They wanted Duke John to endow a church there with the same liberality which he had shown to so many places round. The

relic arrived in the very nick of time, and John founded the beautiful little church which was finally completed in 1513. It was dedicated to St. Jean, and was known as St. Jean du Doigt. The Finger worked wonders, especially in restoring sight to the blind; so, although St. Mériadec had a little chapel given to him in the new church, he soon passed out of fashion; and, indeed, his own beautiful little niche of country before long changed its name from Traoun Mériadec to the Valley of St. Jean du Doigt. The old statue of St. Mériadec soon began to look worn and faded; what more easy then to remove him from view on the pretext that he was falling to pieces, and not to replace him? So St. Mériadec has given way to St. Jean at Plougaznou, and only at Stival does his venerated Bell, the "Bonnet de St. Mériadec," cure headache and earache, when pressed against the temple of the sufferer and rung.

CHAPTER IX

AN TAN

THERE is an older deity than St. Mériadec, however, reigning at Plougaznou, as elsewhere, whom St. Jean, with all his fingers, has not been able to supplant. His great day is known as the "Pardon of Fire," and is celebrated every June 23, as it has been celebrated at the summer solstice since times far before history.

It used to be customary for boats to come to the "Pardon" from places all round the coast, from points as far away as St. Pol de Léon and Locquirer. Each place sent its sacred image, guarded by white-clad maidens in a special boat, to do reverence to St. Jean, while myriads of other boats followed gaily on the waves. But sometimes storms arose, and the men, bent on holiday-making, were often not as quick to furl their sails as on other more sober days, so many a boat went down with its load; and though they do not tell of these in the precincts of St. Jean, the boat processions were discouraged, and now Locquénolé is the most distant spot from which boats arrive, and

they have only to coast down the Morlaix estuary and round the point of Primel.

But on land come banners and processions from every parish within ten miles. When that from Plougaznou is seen approaching, the procession from St. Jean starts out, and the two meet with great ceremony. The crosses first approach, and then the two banners incline to each other, so that the embroidered figures on them actually touch as though giving a kiss of peace. The banners are so heavy that sometimes the bearer hurts himself badly and dies. It requires a muscular frame and sinewy arm to carry it, so much practising and frequent trials take place beforehand to see who is strong enough to uphold the credit of the commune in public. No one in all the procession on the great day is prouder than the man carrying the banner of St. Jean. The expectant crowd watches intently to see if he will make his banner bow without giving way beneath the strain.

Meanwhile, up a rough, hollow path, almost like a ravine, at the east end of the village hurries a procession of men and women, pushing past each other, eager to reach the top of the hill and get near to the Tantad. Those who are blind urge on their guides so that they may be near enough to the fire to feel the magic of its heat in their sightless eyes.

The great pyramid of the Tantad has been built up by the men the day before. Bundles of furze, gorse, and broom have been sent by every household in the commune. The women have put the finishing touches; floral wreaths and garlands hang on the gorse, and brilliant ribbons are twined from top to base in long undulating lines of colour.

Then there is the rope from the stack to the top of the church tower, for, as the peasants say, "That is the way the dragon comes." One by one the priestly processions approach from below. There is singing, and there is the firing of guns, as the procession of St. Jean itself comes up. Here there is a new feature, a choir of young girls dressed in the white frocks which they preserve with such zealous care, hold ribbons tied to a little white ram, by whose side walks a little boy in goatskins.

The beating of a drum announces their arrival at the summit.

A few old men wearing white sword belts and carrying some ancient muskets form a line, and the processions march round the Tantad. Candles flicker in the movement, the fingers of the women are busy with their beads and their lips move quickly. Then all is quiet. The banners are all put away in a small building near, except that of St. Jean. The priests stand at the

foot of the Calvary, and the great banner bows three times to the Tantad. This is the signal for the "Dragon." The rocket comes whizzing along the rope, spluttering and hissing out fire. All register an inward wish as they did when the rocket was made to look like a fiery dove and the festival was held at night. He is uncertain and wayward; if he stops their wishes will not be granted. They breathe freely only when they see him going quickly along the last few yards of rope straight for the goal. He dashes into the centre of the Tantad and kindles it into a blaze. "An Tan! An Tan!" rings out the old cry of the sun worshippers, while answering bonfires flash from hills all round.

The Church may call the festival the "Pardon" of St. Jean, but whether they keep it here or at Plougastel or at Mont St. Michel at Carnac, it is simply the old pagan holy day—the celebration of the worship of the Summer Solstice.

As the bonfire burns into a mighty glow the priests take their banners and hasten away. Men of the crowd plunge their pilgrim staves into the fire and draw them out aglow; boys rush in and snatch a half-consumed branch of glowing gorse; girls scorch their bouquets and run away with the remainder to a higher point, whence they hope to see nine fires at once and thus hasten their marriage; the blind rub the ashes on their eyes.

THE ROUNDABOUT AT A VILLAGE PARDON. *Page 69*

Down below crowds are bathing their eyes in the miraculous fountain—the "Dour ar Bis"—or kissing the relics in the church—pagan one moment, Christian the next. The gateway of the "Arc de Triomphe" is opened in the centre and at the sides; beggars crowd upon the tombstones upon which many of them have slept the night before, in fact some even found a grim shelter in the ossuary. They expose their sores and infirmities, and gather sous. Gradually those from afar turn homewards, while the sun casts the last of his royal rays on the hillside as he sinks down behind his throne of the sea.

CHAPTER X

PARDONS

The Pardon just described is a great "Pardon," the "Pardon of Fire," like that of St. Anne de la Palude, the "Pardon of the Sea," or St. Anne d'Auray, but almost every town and village west of Guingamp has its little "Pardon." To the ordinary visitor it seems a mixture of a religious ceremony and a fair. Booths and stalls are built right up against the church walls. The church is packed for Mass, and those who cannot find room within kneel upon the ground without. In the afternoon a procession round the village, or to some holy tomb or Calvary, takes place, all the banners and relics that can be produced adding their lustre to the cortège.

Men and women put on their finest attire, and this is the time to see the most distinctive dresses of the different communes. The *coiffes* of the women are spotless, the embroideries on their aprons beautiful and frequently barbaric. Their heavy black or dark-blue cloth skirts, too short

to graze the ground, are edged with coloured braids round the bottom, while black velvet figures largely on their bodices and on the men's coats and waistcoats. Some of the costumes are very handsome, and where the men have discontinued or never worn the long ribbons streaming down over their shoulders, the black felt hat is extremely becoming with its wide band of black velvet fastened with a silver buckle.

Some places have their special cakes for the "Pardon," and all have their stalls of delicacies, appetizing or the reverse. Many of these are cooked on the spot.

At the big "Pardons," such as that of St. Jean du Doigt or St. Anne d'Auray, little out-door kitchens have been erected in the adjoining meadows, where things are prepared and cooked, as quickly as they can be sold. In one corner batter is mixed and quickly poured on to hot iron plates; a long wooden knife serves to toss them and they are quickly cooked into the ever popular *crêpes*. A little farther on a few rude stones serve as a hearth for the baking of bread. Near by saucepans rest on burning wood, and steaming coffee scents the air. A penny will purchase a bowlful. For those who prefer a cooler drink, barrels of cider have been brought and set up on wooden props, a glassful being handed over for a single sou. As all the "Pardons" come between May and Sep-

tember, and most occur in hot weather, cider is consumed in great quantity.

It is quite the national drink—in fact, it figures at every meal, and appears on the hotel table as naturally as water. The Breton cider is rather sweet, is very refreshing, and is almost invariably extremely good. It is no wonder that at all open-air functions it is in such great demand. Between the hours of twelve and two, when all formal ceremonial has either ceased or not begun, whole families can be seen quenching their thirst, while the cider-seller has provided them with a rough table, at which they can sit and eat their own provisions. The frugal Bretonne, with her family to think of, prefers to load up her capacious baskets rather than trust to the allurements of local sausages and *crêpes*.

During the "Pardon" the church is never empty. All day long white coifed women enter and spend some few minutes in silent prayer, apparently quite undisturbed by the sounds of revelry outside. In recent years roundabouts, with their shrill steam bands, have entered into the list of amusements; the innovation has helped to disturb the old ballad-singer, whose place at the "Pardons" was so well recognized, and the *biniou*-player who produced in weird minor key the simple melodies which tradition had taught him.

Many of the "Pardons" have distinctive features

of their own, and where these are a matter of religious feeling they will long remain. It has been said that they are the survivals of the ancient Festivals of the Dead, that they can claim some kinship with the Irish Wakes, but that there is no laughter at them, though much prayer. Where the procession of worshippers makes a great tour from church to shrine there is a sense of gravity in the assemblage as though all were thinking of the saint whose "Pardon" they are keeping; but where the "Pardon" is only within the limits of a village the sense of gravity is less apparent, except within the church, and the sound of laughter is more frequent.

The children do not lose the solemnity of the "Pardon" in their excitement at other pleasures. There may be a mysterious ceremony in which they play their part. At Plougastel, on Midsummer Day, they are passed over the bonfire. At the "Pardon of St. Peter" at Motreff they see the sick and the infirm carried to the bonfire; they watch the stones being placed round the dying embers for the souls of the dead to rest on through the night, and they help to carry away the ashes which shall keep away sickness through the year. At St. Anne d'Auray their faces are bathed in the sacred fountain. At Locronan they walk barefooted. They wear their best clothes,

looking so quaint and demure like little imitations of their fathers and mothers. As the young Breton grows up the "Pardon" is the time when solemn vows are made. It marks all the great events of his youth; it occupies an important place in his mind; and as life goes on the impressions of childhood keep up his attachment to the saintly patron of his well-beloved festival.

Sometimes the "Pardons" used to be scenes of great rioting, and a notable instance was at the "Pardon of St. Servais" (whom the Bretons call Sant Gelvest) on May 13, Sant Gelvest being the protector of young crops against the frost. Pilgrims came from all the parishes of Cornouailles and of Vannes, and all the men carried, instead of pilgrim staves, formidable *penn-baz* of hard oak. With these fastened to their wrists they streamed into the church at the sound of the vesper bell. The two districts were in deadly enmity, and the representatives from each occupied different sides of the church. As soon as the "Magnificat" was chanted the *penn-baz* rose in the air, and the opposing camps shouted out their cries.

"Away with the frost! away with the frost!
Oats and wheat to the Cornouaillais!"

was answered by

"Away with the frost!
Oats and wheat and buckwheat to the Vannetais!"

Through the glaring masses the unfortunate Rector advanced, the great banner being borne by one stalwart fellow, while two others carried the little figure of the saint—carved afresh each year. It was a terrible moment for them, for no sooner had they reached the door than the opposing forces fell upon banner and saint shouting "away with the frost." The *penn-baz* rose, and whirled in the air, descending upon the heads and arms of such enemies as could not parry the strokes, and the churchyard became a battle-field. Little remained of either banner or statue when one side had fought its way to victory, but the side that carried off the damaged spoil was assured of an abundant harvest and had no need to fear the frost. The poor Rector and his choir fled to the sacristy, and the wounded rested on the tomb-stones till they were carried home in their jolting carts.

Broken heads and arms were frequent, and blood flowed freely, so that the authorities in recent years had to abolish the ceremony and send gendarmes to stop the fight. But the old folks did not like the change. They say that good harvests are a thing of the past, that the soil could only be made fertile by the shedding of blood in the name of Sant Gelvest.

It might be thought that the great "Pardons" were at great cathedrals, but this is not the case.

They are often held at some little chapel, tomb, or oratory unheard of at other times. Frequently these decay and fall into ruins, sometimes from neglect, sometimes by design on the part of the priests who see lingering traces of paganism in the worship offered to unheard of Celtic saints. But all the same the disciples of the saint will flock to the spot on the day of the "Pardon." You can't measure the worth of the saint by counting the stones of his sanctuary.

Different saints cure different ills, but there is one Breton saint who is, as they say, "Good for everything." There is no malady that St. Yves cannot cure, no wrong that he cannot right. Yves, of Kermartin, is more beloved in Brittany than any other saint, and, as he has been canonized at Rome, the people's devotion to him is encouraged by the clergy. His popular name is Yves, the Truth-shower.

He is the great friend of the poor. The beggars look upon him as their one special patron, and many are the tales they tell of him. "Beggars must be good walkers," they say, and so they have attributed to St. Yves a special power in this respect, as the following story from Le Braz shows:

When the time came for Yves to go to school the only master considered by his parents worthy to teach him lived at Yvias, eight leagues away,

THE PARDON AT CLOHARS: RETURN OF THE PROCESSION TO THE CHURCH. *Page* 61.

and his mother would only consent to his going to school if he could get back to his midday meal and sleep at home. As this did not seem possible, and the education of the boy became more and more necessary, the mother became much distressed. Yves noticed this and inquired into the cause of the trouble.

"You mean to say that that is all?" he cried. "Pack up my ABC and my catechism; to-morrow morning at daybreak I shall start for Yvias, and don't trouble yourself; before twelve o'clock I shall be back again."

They let him have his way, and he started off for Yvias, carrying his little packet of books tied together by a cord on his shoulder. When the other scholars arrived he was already in his place on the form. There he remained without stirring, very attentive, very diligent, till nearly half-past eleven. Then he rose.

"What is the matter?" asked the master.

"It is time I went home. I hear the footstep of the sacristan of Minihi going up the tower stairs to ting the 'Angelus.'"

"Oh! but that is impossible."

"Put your foot upon mine and you will hear as I do."

The twelve o'clock "Angelus" had not finished sounding when the young saint was back beside his mother in the great Hall of Kervarzin. This,

they say, was his first miracle, and for two years he repeated it twice every day.

In actual life he was a great scholar and ecclesiastical lawyer of the thirteenth century. His acts of justice, especially towards the poor, made him famous, and he is commonly represented as the middle figure in a group of three. He figures as the judge between the good poor man and the rich villain. The poor man has written his wrongs on a scroll, which St. Yves receives. The rich man offers his purse, which St. Yves refuses.

St. Yves stands to the Breton for perfect justice; he is their immaculate, incorruptible judge.

There is a little chapel at Porz-Bihan, across the river from Treguier, where St. Yves is specially called upon to award justice to the injured. In the ruins of this chapel there used to reside a worn old barbaric figure of the saint, to whom many a man or woman suffering wrong would appeal for justice and accentuate the appeal by shaking the wooden effigy. If St. Yves will once take up their quarrel, they say, "He will see it through," so if they were unable to go to the place themselves they sent a professional pilgrim to the audience chamber instead. A few years ago the Rector of Trédarzec pulled down the ruins and removed the saint to a garret in his house. But pilgrims still go to pray on the spot

TREGUIER CATHEDRAL. *Pages* 67, 68.

sacred to them, and some say that the saint has come back to hear them.

And as for the old Rector—well, one evening he refused to let St. Yves in his garret grant audience to three pilgrims, and the next morning the Rector was found dead in his bed. The servant had heard in the night on the stairs "the step of someone made of wood."

The "Pardon of St. Yves" or the "Pardon of the Poor" is a silent one. The people walk in silent procession, without priest or choir, in the night from Treguier Cathedral, of which St. Yves was Bishop, to his tomb at Minihi. Beggars with every kind of mutilation or disease fill the ditches by the roadside, clamouring for alms "in the name of St. Yves."

In the Minihi Churchyard pilgrims are dimly outlined against the tombs in their slow silent walk.

In the Manor of Kervarzin the hospitality which St. Yves showed to the poor is still kept up. The farmer who now lives in the house welcomes all who come, and you may well believe that his great kitchen is filled at night-fall. Those who cannot find room on the long wooden bench sit on the hard floor or lean against a spare patch of the wall. Although it is nearly June, the bright blaze of burning wood and peat brings a welcome warmth to the ill-clad crowd

while the great pot gives out a savoury steam. A large number of bowls standing on the table already contain the *crêpes*, and when the soup is ready to be poured on, some discipline has to be exercised among the clamorous throng. When all have supped they are led to the outbuildings, and find a night's rest on the clean straw of the barns and hay-lofts.

St. Yves died in 1303, but even after all these years, his spirit of loving-kindness to the poor has not deserted the precincts of his old home. They say that the present house was built in exact imitation of the original one, and that the hard pallet in the corner is the one on which St. Yves actually slept for many years.

The next morning the church is full to overflowing; and outside, beneath the arched tomb of the saint, pilgrims crawl on their knees. They kiss the damp stone with their lips, murmuring part of the "Litany of St. Yves," which they have learnt at Treguier, and asking in simpler language for the special boon which they desire.

Inside the Cathedral of Treguier a modern beautifully carved memorial to St. Yves is the centre of more worship, and on September 8 his followers keep vigil all night. They may be seen praying, bead-telling, moving silently past the white monument, or perhaps sleeping from sheer weariness in some shadowy corner,

till roused by the sudden singing of the Song of St. Yves.

The next day a great imposing procession parades the streets of Treguier, but it is very different from the silent one which wends its way to the simple tomb of Minihi at the real "Pardon of the Poor."

CHAPTER XI

MARKETS

Every town and village is seen at its brightest on Sundays and market-days. Sunday at St. Malo shows the little narrow, picturesque streets filled with holiday-makers all through the summer. Business goes on briskly; in the Grande Rue towers of picture postcards have their circle of admirers, in the Rue de la Barbissais a large gramophone brays its invitation to the passers-by to enter a labyrinth of toys. Maidens, wearing the northern *coiffe*, form picturesque groups at the corners; crowds throng the ramparts to watch the yachts sailing in the bay; men and women sit round the Marché aux Poissons taking their *déjeuners*, their cider or their *sirops*, while those wishing for quiet without solitude sit in or about the bathing-tents on the smooth firm sands.

On market-days dame after dame can be watched driving her little dogcart through the St. Vincent gate in the thick walls. Often two of these dames sit on the seat together both in black dress and white *coiffe*. Buxom and strong,

ST. MALO. *Page* 70.

with no stoop in their shoulders, however grey the hair, they sit erect on the little board which serves as seat, and whether old or young they spring in and out of their carts with the agility that bespeaks an active life.

It is a pity that in these northern parts of Brittany the men have ceased to wear any distinctive dress; the women, too, here and there, are losing their allegiance to the *coiffe* in the big towns. Go to a village wedding, however, and the older women will certainly wear them, though the children, who come from all the villages within trudging distance to eat the bread which custom orders the bride's family to provide, will show a leaning towards the less picturesque hats of the town.

At Dinan the market-women will appear in their dainty head-gear, bringing fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce to sell under the arcades of the Place de l'Apport, or at Fougeres they can be seen carrying quaint cradles, filled with cans of cream or milk, on their heads.

All these are curious and interesting, but to see a Breton market at its best one must go farther south or west.

Landerneau provides a quaint setting, for everything has to cross the old bridge which still supports a row of medieval houses on each side. In the line of route can be seen many "Chapel-

leries." This is the day when the men must be tempted to buy new hats or at least new ribbons and buckles. But there are no milliners; the women have no need for millinery; they wear the cap of Cornouailles. Near by, at Landivisiau, girls can be seen selling their tresses for a week's earnings.

St. Pol de Léon provides a very pretty sight, with the double line of Léon women extending all along the Grande Rue, right from the Kreisker to the Cathedral, selling butter and eggs. Purchasers pass along between them, sample the wares, and make their choice. In the Cathedral square are the usual stalls of hardware and haberdashery, while the crockery takes its stand on the cobble-stones as near to the Cathedral door as it can. It is to be wondered at that the crockery has not taken up its abode inside the porch for safety, for such a proceeding is by no means uncommon. There is a stall of nuts and gingerbread in the beautiful Kreisker doorway just below.

The beautiful Cathedral is open all day, and few women leave the market without going into it for a few minutes' prayer. The great bell of St. Pol rests in a shrine above the altar. When it is rung over the heads of those suffering from headache all pain goes. St. Pol de Léon resembles our St. George, inasmuch as he waged

THE KREISKER CHURCH: WEST DOOR. *Page* 45.

war upon a terrible dragon and finally hurled him into the sea at the Isle of Baz. The cleft in the rock, where he was killed, is known as the "Dour ar Sarpent," and the cry of his tortured spirit can still be heard by those who know how to interpret strange sounds.

Perhaps the little-visited town of Redon in the south gives one as good a picture of a typical Breton market as one can desire.

There the Place de Bretagne fulfils its destiny every other Monday, when a market, or a fair, draws in farmers and peasants from all the country round. All the animals for sale congregate in the huge square, till the whisking of tails, the swinging of little sticks, and the squealing of many pigs tire out the eyes and ears. The pigs enter in two ways: the lowly on foot, the lordly in carts. Black-robed, white-coifed dames bring their four-footed possessions in with a cord. The walk is tiring and hot, so they come early to take their stand in the shadow of the railway-wall. Each dame carries a black basket and a large umbrella. The fortunate possessors of the shade put down both by the wall, and piggy sits down by their side. The *porc* is, however, a trying beast, and soon pulls at his string. His guide is equal to this, draws from her basket a little straw, throws into it a few grains of corn, and leaves piggy to rootle for the corn among the straw and dust.

This keeps him occupied while she converses with her neighbour and looks out for a buyer. The buyers are invariably men, the sellers chiefly women. Up comes a man in round felt hat and bright blue smock, and with a few well-directed prods of his stick makes piggy turn round and show his points. "What is the price?" Madame asks *dix-huit pistolets*. Monsieur raises his arms and shakes his head, so that the long black-velvet ribbons of his hat swing from side to side.

"Fifteen *pistolets* is all it is worth."

Madame comes down to seventeen, and holds out her right hand. This he slaps with his, as a sign that the bargaining is finished.

If Monsieur is a man of property it is noticed that his smock is fastened at the neck with a little silver clasp, and that he wears beneath it a waistcoat of black corduroy velvet.

If Madame has occasion to take her charge to another corner of the "Place" she plants the umbrella under, and the handle of her basket over, her left arm, and takes piggy's string firmly in her right hand, giving it an occasional guiding jerk with her left forefinger. If piggy won't lead with sufficient velocity, why, Madame has her knee, and piggy feels an accelerating impetus from behind.

Cart after cart arrives, containing pigs of all sizes, some in crates like bicycles and some loose.

PIG-MARKET AT REDON. *Pages* 73-77.

Those in crates are generally of enormous size, and are easily disposed of; the crate is put upright in the square, and a considerate owner puts a branch of cool broad leaves on the top to shield the animal from the sun. The loose ones need a little more attention. One cart is very dexterously served; the back is let down, and three men at a given signal pull at the three tails of the pigs disclosed; this brings the pigs to the rear. With their other hands the men seize the ears of the animals, and at another signal swing them dexterously to the ground, where they are held by the usual strings and provided with the usual straw and grain. The owner of a larger herd achieves economy of herdsmen by making the pigs descend into a small roofless cage, about ½ yard high. It is only the most intelligent porker that attempts to get over this frail barrier, and when he does, there is a general chase. The adventure of M. Porc is, however, soon cut short, and he is ignominiously brought back by the tail. An occasional tailless porker might suggest that the pull at some time or other had been too strong, were it not that everyone shows much kindness to their charges.

Men must eat and women cook, so at the upper end of the market a few women, also white-coifed and black-robed, have erected tiny stalls, with sausages and various fish on view. Upon a few burning logs of wood in the rear rests a sauce-

pan, into which sausage, or fish, or both, anchovy, haddock, or sprats, are cast at the bidding of the hungry, who receives the article of his choice steaming hot upon a thick slice of bread.

No leather harness adorns the horses of the two-wheeled country carts, but that they, too, shall not go uncared for, two women sit at the foot of the Great Tower of St. Sauveur, selling straw collars edged with a spiky straw fringe to suit the neck of horse or pony. Hither come men in smocks of black, or grey, or blue, bargaining for these as for everything else, and bringing the price down to the lowest number of sous that the two women will take.

Beyond, in the Place de La Duchesse Anne, beneath the dormer windows of the quaint old houses, women and children find sabots to suit all feet. Just round the corner a man displays his muslin wares on the pavement. A Breton dame, whose green shawl looks distinctive among so many black ones, picks up an embroidered piece, but it is 1 fr. 80 c., and not enough for a whole *coiffe*, so she must buy some simpler muslin instead, and takes away half a metre for 90 centimes.

Teams of yoked oxen come in during the day for sale, and the colours must match as much as those of any pair of English horses—white splashes on a red ground must go with white on red, and not with white on black. Single cows follow

gently some slow-pacing woman, who indicates the way by a pull on a cord from the horn.

The cafés round the Square fill up their *carafes* of cider again and again on the little outside tables, and buyers can take a rest and lunch in the heat of the noontide, but sellers must guard their pigs and cows, glad only if the pig takes a siesta and lets them take a munch at something drawn from the black basket. If the pig can be trusted to the watchful eye of a neighbour, there is time to get a savoury morsel from a stall across the Square and accompany it by a length of bread, which seems to be measured and sold by the metre.

As the afternoon draws towards four o'clock the homeward trend begins; small pigs are carried, others are led; and it must be owned that when Breton and Bretonne return together it is not often that Breton exerts himself much. As the lady at our confectioner's explained: "Le porc est un vilain bête et il est toujours la femme qui est chargée de lui conduire."

CHAPTER XII

THE CULT OF THE DEAD

If Redon sells its sabots, Quimperlé devotes a modest corner of its market to the making of *chausson* to go in them. These are knitted socks, no higher than a boot, and to their sole are sewn strong coverings of yellow leather. Sabots are not really comfortable, but with these socks inside they are easily slipped off while the owner runs nimbly about in house or shop.

Outside the door of a house in a little street of Quimperlé hangs some black drapery marked with white crosses. All know its meaning without the little card pinned up outside, asking for the prayers of all for the one within—a young postman who has just died. His parents have drawn the shutters of their little baker's shop and sit watching beside the coffin, which is covered by a purple pall. All who pass, except those with living freight, go in, kneel in prayer for a few moments, and come out to continue their way. A little maiden, taken in by her mother, crosses herself as

OPEN-AIR COOKING. *Page* 75.

she comes out and goes on to do her marketing, more serious than before.

Many go to the church and ask a blessing on their purchases, and at St. Sauveur, at Redon, it is to St. Anthony of Padua that most wend their steps. Umbrellas and baskets are deposited at the side, and the prayer tablet is lifted down and read. After each prayer the suppliant rises to drop a sou into the little coffer of St. Anthony, and retires to kneel in the subdued light of the beautiful Gothic window while the hour rings out from the Norman tower above.

The Bretons' reverence for the dead almost amounts to worship, especially in the country of Léon. They say you must have the friendship of the dead, for, if not, their anger is terrible and you will be certain to suffer. Although the bodies are buried, the souls are not enclosed in their graves; they haunt the highroads at night, and crowd together in the woods and lanes. Even the fields are full of them. They are tremendously attached to their old homes, and revisit them in the silence of the night, where they are seen dimly outlined round the hearth. They have not, however, been seen so often since the modern bedsteads have tended to replace the old *lits clos*.

Half a century ago there used to be a commemoration day, when a procession went round the towns invoking the dead in a special litany.

On All Souls' Eve a bowl of cream is still left on the table for their midnight refreshment. Sometimes an ancestor is expected to make himself useful and find a lost article when called upon by a descendant who puts a coin on his grave; or, if a man has to get up at some unusual hour, he arranges with a dead relative to call him early.

It is not to be wondered at that the graveyards have been the centre of the commune, not only the centre of thought, but the actual centre of the village.

So the Breton churchyards provide the most curious and wonderful Calvaries. Sometimes they show the crosses of the Crucifixion supported by a massive stone base, as at St. Thégonnec, or surround the crosses with figures of the Apostles, as at Pont Croix near Douarnénez. Sometimes they are covered with carving like the famous one at Plougastel, upon which are carved a hundred and thirty-five figures representing many of the New Testament scenes. The representation is full of anachronisms, for some of the figures wear the Breton dress, and one man plays upon the *biniou* on the way to the Crucifixion. This Calvary was erected in 1600, and a copy of it was set up outside the beautiful church of Guimiliau. The little village of Plougastel is full of life and colour on any Sunday for the men as well as the women have a brilliant national dress. The men's coats are light blue

and their waistcoats green, with wonderful embroideries. The children are as pretty as dress can make them, and even little babies are tied up with ribbons embroidered with vivid colours. The women wear their *coiffes* in two different ways. On great occasions, such as marriages or christenings, two wide pieces extend down each side of the face, but on ordinary occasions these pieces are tied up.

Calvaries do not only occur in churchyards, although a churchyard can scarcely be found without one; they are set up everywhere—at the top of a hill, at a sacred fountain, at four cross roads; in fact one can find one's way about the country by means of them, and it is no uncommon thing to see a woman take her sewing and sit at the base of a Calvary not far from her door while she works away quietly in its shade.

In many churchyards there are still to be found curious ossuaries where the bones of the dead were stored. The churchyard, being in the centre of the village, could not grow, so when the village expanded into a town it was insufficient. It was out of the question to put up a cemetery outside the town, because the peasants could not be separated from their dead, who had to be associated with everything that went on, and how could they take their part in affairs if they were far away? So the churchyard had to suffice as it was, and the

graves were emptied every seven years. The bones dug up were put into the ossuaries, the skulls often on shelves in little wooden boxes, marked with the name of the dead, so that his relatives could be constantly reminded of him.

The ossuaries are now seldom used, for pressure has been brought to bear on the people, and churches and graveyards have been erected on the outskirts of the town.

CHAPTER XIII

FISHERFOLK

The Bretons are by nature true sailors, and fishing is one of their chief industries. Many ports, like Paimpol, send out great fleets to the deep-sea fishing near Iceland. No letters or messages can reach their homes from the men engaged in their hazardous craft, and every year the fleet returns smaller than it went out. So there is hope and fear in the hearts of all the throng that crowds the shore when the first boat is seen returning. The news it brings gives thankfulness to many, but amid that thankfulness is the aching sorrow of those who must go away lonely to their homes, with the knowledge that loneliness and poverty must henceforth be their lot.

A less dangerous life is that of the sardine-fisher. These fish frequent the neighbourhood of Concarneau in June, work up to Audierne and Douarnénez by August, are off St. Pol de Léon in September, and then leave Brittany for the north.

The Bay of Douarnénez is alive with the little fishing-boats running in and out with their brown sails filled by the wind.

As the boats come in the women put down their knitting, with which they employ themselves during every moment of leisure, and hasten down to the piers. They load their baskets with the fish, and carry them off to be cleaned with salt. The first thing to be done by the fishermen is to look after the fishing-nets, for they are frail and most expensive. They are a pale-blue colour, and one set has to last a man for his lifetime. The nets are hung up to dry, sometimes on special props and sometimes on the masts of the ships. Concarneau Harbour shows a wonderful array of boats draped with blue nets, and the time to see them at their best is at the Fête des Filets Bleus—a wonderful feast of colour for those who can stand the smell.

In the little streets women sit outside their doors mending the nets upon which the prosperity of the family depends, and plunging them into blue dye while the brown corks are washed and put on again. The combination of brown and blue seems an echo of the colours of the fisherman's dress, which is always blue or brown, with great patches looking lighter here and there, because of the fading affected in the original garments by sun and sea.

Factories line the quay where the dressing of the fish and boiling of the oil is carried on, and the odour on the quay is beyond description, when there is no wind to carry it off.

Sometimes the sardines leave the Breton coast, and the people would be reduced to terrible poverty, were it not that tunny and mackerel are also caught in great numbers, and can be cured and tinned in pieces, much like sardines. But all the same, it is a very anxious time when the rumour spreads that the sardines are not coming in their usual numbers.

At Auray and Cancale oyster-breeding is the chief industry, and at Cancale the oyster-beds cover about 450 acres. As the sea goes down rows upon rows of short stakes appear, dividing the whole shore into countless watery allotments. These are the *parcs aux huîtres*, and among them near the shore are to be seen the bending figures of the oyster-women filling their baskets with their heavy loads. At high water, and specially at the spring tides, multitudes of little boats wind in and out amongst the wading women and bear away the spoil to the pier and market.

Little *parcs* close in shore are constantly being cleaned out and refilled to supply the daily needs of the little village, for during the season each train brings its full burden of visitors, who crowd round the tables outside the inns on the

quay, or fill the terrace of the Du Guesclin Hôtel. All come to make a *déjeuner* of oysters, and if the guests of the hotel add to their oyster-feast a view of the Rochers de Cancale and a glimpse of Mont St. Michel across the bay, those of the quay devour theirs within sound and sight of the buxom fisherwomen who clatter in their clogs over the noisy cobbles.

Many a motor drops its load on the shore, and a high-heeled lady picks her way down to the nearest *parc* with her attendant squire. There is a bid for her custom from the nearest women who stand like guardians of their plots, and as soon as her pleasure is known a good-sized specimen is lifted out, opened in a little machine and handed to the lady, who has in the meantime extricated her face from a mass of blue veils. Oyster after oyster is rapidly swallowed; in fact, the burial of the victim follows its death with almost indecent haste.

The other oyster-women show little sign of disappointment, but turn their attention to their baskets which they continue to fill from a very muddy bed, and to wash in a ground tank of sea-water. These women are not handsome, but they are big, and their dress is more useful than becoming. Heavy dark-grey felt skirts are covered with coarse sackcloth aprons, and, though very short, are always wet; their bodices are thick and

dark, and the only relief to their sombre clothing is the plain white *coiffe* which covers the black plaits of hair.

Every year the little fishing-boats go out in their hundreds to fetch back the tiny oysters to be nurtured at Cancale. Each carries five sails, but there is a day when the *Bisques* show their allegiance to Cancale by donning extra attire and presenting seven sails to the wind. That is on the day of the regatta. For the oyster-fishing, however (and perhaps for safety, for the two extra sails are added to the *top* of the mast), five sails suffice, and the bay is full of life and movement when these five sails are furled on the entire fleet, as each boat sails to her proper place at high tide and lowers her net full of tiny oysters to the beds below.

CHAPTER XIV

BERTRAND DU GUESCLIN

Brittany produced a hero in the time of her terrible civil wars, whose name is unrivalled in the annals of chivalry. Bertrand du Guesclin, however, began badly; he was so ugly that his parents hated him.

> "L'enfant dont je dis et dont je vais parlant
> Je crois qu'il n'est si laid de Rennes à Dinan,"

wrote his chronicler, Cuvelier.

Furthermore, he was bad-tempered, ill-mannered and intractable, in short a little savage, and such he remained until his uncle in Rennes, with whom he lived for several years after running away from home, charmed the boy by tales of heroism and chivalry, and filled him with a desire to become a true knight. Instead of fighting all the boys round and returning with torn clothes and bleeding face, as he had done at home, he joined in the wrestling matches and games of skill.

At the age of sixteen Bertrand was allowed to return home, where Renard du Guesclin was so pleased with the change in his son's character that

CHRISTENING PARTY, PLOUGASTEL. *Page* 80.

he forgot to observe the ugliness of his big round head and short little nose in noticing the fire of his eyes and strength of his limbs.

When Jeanne of Penthièvre, heiress of the Duchy of Brittany, married Charles of Blois, nephew of the King of France, there were great doings in the country, including, of course, a grand tournament at Rennes. All the nobility of Brittany was invited to the fête, and Bertrand's father spared nothing to cut a good figure. But the boy of seventeen was considered too young to act as more than spectator and was poorly equipped even for that rôle. What would he not have given for a good horse and armour? Suddenly he saw a relative retire from the lists after having broken several lances, and Bertrand followed him to his lodging to beg him to lend him his horse and armour. The knight was touched by the sincerity of the young man, lent him a fresh horse and armed him himself. Off hurried Bertrand to the lists, and, without giving his name, defied a knight to combat. As soon as the signal was given Bertrand hurled himself with such force at his antagonist that he killed the horse and threw its master fainting to the ground.

A knight with closed vizor appeared to avenge the vanquished; Bertrand was about to attack him, when he noticed the coat of arms of his adversary, and found it was his own father, so,

to the great astonishment of the spectators, he lowered his lance and bowed low as a sign of respect.

He then offered battle to fifteen other knights and unhorsed them all. The admiration and applause were unbounded, and all burned to know who he was, when Renard du Guesclin recognized his son, ran to embrace him, and thus revealed his name to the assemblage.

Bertrand was proclaimed victor to the sound of trumpets, and received a huge silver swan as the prize, which he at once took to the knight who had so generously equipped him.

That was the happiest day of Bertrand's life. Thenceforward he enjoyed the esteem and love of his father, who gave him the equipment of a soldier and such estate as enabled him to appear honourably in the world.

In 1341, three years after the tournament at Rennes, there began a terrible time of bloodshed for Brittany. The Duchy was claimed by both Charles of Blois and Jean de Montfort, who pushed their claims at the point of the sword. Du Guesclin fought under the banner of Charles, who was supported by the French King. As Edward III. supported De Montfort and sent out his son the Duke of Lancaster in command of the English, Du Guesclin found himself in opposition to the renowned soldiers of England at a time when

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Creçy and Poictiers were about to shed such splendid lustre on her arms.

The war was full of ambuscades and sieges, and though no decisive battles were fought Du Guesclin gave Lancaster many an anxious hour. Such stories of his heroism and generosity were heard that Lancaster wished to meet the celebrated Breton, and at the siege of Rennes invited Du Guesclin to leave the town under a flag of truce and visit him in his tent. There Du Guesclin was entertained royally and made many friends among his enemies.

Three years after Poictiers we again see Lancaster besieging a town with Du Guesclin inside. This time it was Dinan, and again we have a scene enacted typical of the age of chivalry. During a truce Bertrand's brother was taken prisoner by the Duke of Canterbury. Bertrand heard of it, called for his horse, and crying, "By St. Yves he shall give him up," galloped off to Lancaster's tent. Lancaster received him with the honour due to a brave enemy, and called upon Canterbury to make amends. Instead of that, however, Canterbury threw down his gauntlet and challenged Du Guesclin to combat.

The lists were opened in the market-place at Dinan, and the leaders on both sides joined in watching the combat, hostages being given by the town to ensure the safety of Lancaster and

one hundred of his barons and knights. Canterbury was a bold knight, and it was not till after some time that Du Guesclin succeeded in laying him in the dust. He spared his life at the request of the Duke, and Lancaster gave him the arms and horse of the fallen knight, adding £1,000 himself to the gift.

The war ended at the Battle of Auray in 1364, where Charles of Blois made the fatal mistake of keeping the command of his own army instead of giving it to Du Guesclin. Charles paid for his foolishness with his life and with those of his supporters. Young Montfort was carried to victory by his English army, and henceforth ruled as Duke of Brittany. Du Guesclin, trying to fight twenty English knights at once, was unable to beat them off and was at last taken prisoner. His ransom was fixed at the enormous sum of 100,000 francs, of which Charles V. King of France paid half.

The war being at an end, France felt the scourge of disbanded mercenaries. These grouped themselves into the *grandes compagnies* and ravaged the country, especially Brittany. Charles hit upon the brilliant idea of sending them into Spain, under the leadership of Du Guesclin, to fight the Moors. It was a delicate business, and it was only Du Guesclin's personality and fame which carried it through. They were attracted by the

thought of serving so illustrious a leader, gave up their life of brigandage, and followed him to Spain.

Castile was in the hands of an execrable monarch, by name Don Pedro, who had recently added to his list of crimes the murder of his wife Blanche of France. The terrified Spaniards, tortured and murdered at every turn, appealed through Pedro's half-brother Henry of Trastamare for help to France and Aragon. Du Guesclin arrived at a critical moment, and chased Pedro out of Castile. Church and State lost no time in crowning Henry, who thereupon enriched Du Guesclin with magnificent presents, and named him Constable of Castile.

Pedro, vowing terrible vengeance against Henry and his supporters, set off for Bordeaux, hoping to gain the ear of the Black Prince. He whined out a story of wrongs, said the Castilians longed for his return as a deliverer, omitted to mention his practised taste in murder, and in short, took in the Black Prince. So an English army went south in 1367 to reinstate this villain. There was a terrible march through the Pyrenees before the English troops drew up before Navarete. In spite, however, of fatigue and hunger the English fought desperately, and won. It was a thousand pities that so much courage and skill were spent in so poor a cause. Du Guesclin dragged King Henry out of the fray and then returned to the battle,

though without hope of success. With half a dozen brave knights he fought on, striking admiration and fear into the hearts of the English, till the Black Prince himself ran up, crying, "Valiant knights, you have done enough to satisfy glory; resistance is useless; give up your swords."

So Bertrand became an honoured prisoner in the camp of Prince Edward, being free to move about on parole till the Prince returned to Bordeaux, when Edward III. sent a message that he was to be imprisoned in a fortress. Here he was shut up for many months, making many friends among the English nobles. One day the Black Prince sent for him.

"Bertrand," said the Prince, "people say that I am keeping you prisoner out of fear. To crush this rumour I set you free at ransom."

"Sire," answered Bertrand, "remember that I am a poor knight without money, with my lands all pledged, and that I am even in debt here for the necessaries of life."

"Fix your own ransom," said the Prince.

This was a test, indeed, of Bertrand's honour and generosity. He remembered how much his sword was worth in battle and how he had commanded the army of a great King.

"Sire," he said, "since you trust to me, you must not suffer for it. My ransom shall be 100,000 golden francs."

OSSUARY AT GUIMILIAU. *Page* 81.

"Half will be enough," said the Prince. "How can you possibly obtain more?"

"I persist in what I have named," answered Bertrand, "and as for obtaining it, Don Henri is already on his way to be once more King of Spain, he will pay half; I dare say the King of France will pay the other, but if not there isn't a woman in Brittany who knows how to spin who won't earn something with her distaff to release me from prison."

Bertrand was therefore set at liberty on parole, and swore to raise no sword till he had brought back to Bordeaux the 100,000 francs. Everyone wanted to see this marvel of a man who, poor and in debt, had fixed his own ransom, so Bertrand had to submit to being lionized. The Princess of Wales hurried back to bid "God speed" to the Breton hero, and when he knelt before her raised him up and kissed his cheek.

"I thought I was the ugliest cavalier in the world," he said, "but I have a better opinion of myself now, since so beautiful and so noble a lady has shown me such favour."

The Princess did more, however, she paid 10,000 francs towards the ransom, and some of the English nobles added to it, while others cleared his debts in Bordeaux.

By the time he reached home he had given it

all away to poor companions in arms, and relied on the revenues of his estate and his wife's jewels to help him. But he had a wife like himself. A multitude of poor knights and squires taken prisoner at Navarete and liberated on parole had come to visit their General's wife. Their condition was heartrending, and she had given them all she possessed. Bertrand praised the faithful wife who had so well understood what he would have wished.

So he turned to his Breton friends, and they vied with each other in helping to free their valiant hero. In a few days he was off to Bordeaux with the ransom. But all along the route he came upon poor soldiers who had served under him in Spain—ill-treated prisoners, who had been sent out on parole to gather their ransom, and who showed him their feet and hands torn and bruised by their chains. Bertrand moved to pity gave—gave always. At Bordeaux he presented himself before the Black Prince, who complimented him on the speedy success of the journey.

"Where are you lodging in Bordeaux?" asked the Prince.

"In prison, Sire," replied Bertrand. "It is true that I have received more gold than I needed for my ransom; but I have spent it all on my poor brothers in arms. How could I have done otherwise?"

Du Guesclin, however, did not return to his prison. The Prince set him free on parole, and he was fêted by all the English nobles in Bordeaux. A little while afterwards there came some mules bearing the Royal arms and bringing 30,000 florins from the King of France. The surplus was paid by Henry of Trastamare and the Duke of Anjou, when Du Guesclin being once more free to take up arms, called together the remnants of his *grandes compagnies* and hastened off to protect Henry, now once more King of Spain, but harassed by the contemptible Pedro. Success followed him, and he was recalled by Charles V. to France because of a fresh outbreak of war with England. Du Guesclin carried on a victorious campaign in the South, largely due to the fact that the Black Prince was too ill to keep command, but in the North Charles was having a bad time, and Paris was threatened. At this stage all thoughts were turned towards Du Guesclin as the one man able to save the country. Charles sent for him to Paris and made him Constable of France.

So during the year 1370 Du Guesclin conducted a rapid and successful campaign, in which he drove the English from Normandy and Poitou. Jealousy at the Court, however, began to work against him, and Charles was told that the Constable had wasted money on the soldiers, and

was persuaded not to send him any more. Du Guesclin paid the men himself, till he had spent all he had, and then went to the Court, where Charles was so overcome by his generosity and honesty of purpose that, to show him increased confidence, he made him godfather to his little son.

A few years later, in 1378, Charles V. made a great mistake. John of Brittany—not his people—being on the side of the English was called to account for this, was treated as a traitor, and Brittany annexed to France. Now, although the Bretons were loyal to the suzerainty of France they were more loyal to their national independence, so they ranged themselves on the side of their Duke and rebelled. All his Bretons left Du Guesclin, whose sorrow was great when Charles ordered him to enter Brittany and reduce his land to submission by the sword. He begged to be allowed to go elsewhere. Charles insisted. All the Breton soldiers who had served him from his youth refused to follow him; instead of acclamations in the villages and towns he heard imprecations. From that moment his success waned. In 1379 he watched from the walls of St. Malo the triumphal return of Duke John. Again envious complaints broke out against him at the Court, and he hastened there to give up his Constable's sword. Charles then saw that he had put too great a strain upon this great man,

who, in wielding that sword against his own countrymen, had given him more than his life. The sword remained with Du Guesclin, but he was sent to use it not in Brittany but in Auvergne. There, in 1379, he conducted his last campaign, and while besieging the fortress of Château Neuf de Randon felt the approach of death. The Governor agreed to capitulate, but would only give up the keys to Du Guesclin, and went out to his tent followed by all the garrison. They found the dying hero surrounded by weeping officers. The Governor knelt by the couch, and putting down the keys, said: "These are the keys of the town whose defence was confided to me by the King of England. I give them up to the most perfect knight who has lived for the last hundred years." A few minutes later Du Guesclin asked for his Constable's sword, and with the words, "Marshal, give back this sword to the King of France, and let all of you love each other and serve him well," passed away.

He wished to be buried at Dinan by the side of his wife Typhaine, but only his heart lies there, for Charles wished to honour him, even after death, and, as Froissart tells us, "He was caryed to saynt Denyse in Fraunce, and there he was layde in sepulture, nere to the tombe of kynge Charles, whiche the kynge had made for hym in his dayes: and so he laye at the kynges fete; and there his

obsequy was done right honorably, as though he hadde ben the kynges sonne: and there was all the kynges bretherne, and notable persones of the realme of Fraunce. Thus, by the dethe of Sir Bertram of Clesquy, the office of the constable-shyppe of Fraunce was voyde."

CHAPTER XV

THE DUCHESS ANNE

Just a hundred and twenty-four years after the end of the strife between Jean de Montfort and Charles of Blois—or the War of the two Jeannes as it was called, because of the part played by the wives of the two combatants—fresh troubles began for Brittany. A little girl of twelve succeeded to the Duchy on the death of her father in 1488, and difficulties at once began about her marriage. So many people wanted to marry Anne. That fact in itself would not have mattered had they taken a refusal with dignity. Instead of that they fought about it and flung armies into poor Brittany. Even people who did not want to marry her themselves sent armies to help those who did. Perhaps it was as well for Anne that she lived before the time of England's Henry VIII. or there might have been another Anne to figure in his extensive matrimonial list. Her father had betrothed her to the son of Edward IV., but the poor little Prince was murdered in the tower, so no more thoughts were given to England.

In 1490, when she was just fourteen, Anne decided to marry Maximilian of Austria, but did it by proxy and in secret, so, when Charles VIII. of France heard of it, there was trouble, because he considered that as Suzerain he ought to have a voice in the matter. The Bretons, too, were annoyed at the secrecy of the affair and made fun of the German proxy ceremony, so when Charles appeared with an army and held his Court at Nantes, he easily won over the nobles by bribes or promises, and poor little Anne found herself deserted by almost all her subjects. A faithful few harassed the French army as much as they could, but at length Anne found herself besieged in Rennes, with mutinous foreign mercenaries inside the walls, and Charles in command of a powerful army without. Charles sent envoys to the stricken girl. He offered her money, he offered her husbands. Anne ignored the money and refused the husbands. She said she had one already.

Then a brilliant idea occurred to Charles. He would lay siege to this *haute et indomptable* heart, and marry her himself. Her confessor, conspiring with her faithless nobles, solemnly assured her that it was the will of God, so Anne agreed to have a personal interview with the King. Charles exerted all his tact, persuaded Anne that the marriage with Maximilian was not

binding, and in three days they were betrothed in the Chapel of Notre Dame. Charles had to get over a little matrimonial difficulty of his own, for when he was twelve years old he was married to Margaret, Maximilian's little daughter of three. Margaret had resided in France ever since and had been treated as Queen, but no further marriage had been solemnized on a Royal scale. So Charles despatched Margaret, now aged fifteen, back to her father, and the Austrian Court was furious at the flagrant violation of all promises, on the part of Charles and Anne. The Pope granted the dispensation, which was, however, only asked for after the marriage.

The country was so poor that a little while previously Anne had had to issue "black money" —a tiny piece of silver embedded in leather to prevent it from being lost—but she provided luxuriously for her journey to Langeois, where her wedding with Charles was to take place. It took 139 skins of sable to trim her travelling cloak; one of her camp bedsteads had canopy, curtains, and hangings of crimson cloth, embroidered and festooned with gold and all lined with blue taffeta.

As for her wedding-dress, it was so rich in gold that it cost over £5,000 before it was made up, and her maids of honour were dressed in tan-coloured velvet.

She made a striking appearance, but she brought Charles something else besides her beauty. She added to his kingdom the largest duchy in Europe. It was carefully stipulated in the marriage contract that "in consideration of the honour which Charles VIII. had conferred on her in marrying her, she gave up to him entire possession of the duchy," and if he died first she agreed, in order to avoid further wars, not to marry any one else but his successor.

Anne was crowned Queen of France at the Church of St. Denis in Paris, on February 8, 1492. She was dressed in a white satin robe, her dark hair hanging over her shoulders; the crown of France was too large and heavy for her, so it was held over her head by Louis Duc d'Orléans.

Charles treated her royally, and the shrewd Bretonne, young as she was, made her position at Court a very real one; but although she possessed keen intelligence and an obstinate character, Charles never let himself be ruled by her, and even in the administration of her own duchy she had to submit to all the acts being given in his name.

Anne had great sorrow through her children of whom there were four, for they all died in infancy. Everything was done to save them; they had Breton nurses and Breton charms. Among the charms were a cloth-of-gold bag containing a piece of black wax, a set of sea-serpents' tongues

PORTE AND RUE DU JERZUAL, DINAN. *Page* 91.

and rosaries of jasper. She sent gifts to St. Anne d'Auray, and offerings to all the saints she could think of. She went on a pilgrimage to all the chief shrines and included a visit on foot to the miraculous Finger of St. Jean at Plougaznou. It was all of no use; one after another the little children died, and the Bretons said it was a punishment for having married Charles when she had already married Maximilian. With the Bretons' love for the dead she insisted that the children should be buried, not at Paris, but at Tours, so that she could frequently go to weep and pray at their tomb.

In April, 1498, Charles died and Louis of Orleans became King. The grief of the little Queen, not yet twenty-one, was so great that she would neither eat nor sleep, and Louis became much concerned. One of her favourite Bishops was summoned and gave her consolation, so that she busied herself a little more with her duties. She sent black silk and woollen cloth to the Breton lords and barons, as though she realized at once that by the King's death she ceased to be a Queen, and became once more only Duchess of Brittany. She had, however, absolute power in her Duchy, and Louis, seeking to please her in every possible way, removed all French troops from her towns and ordered his captains and archers to give up their commands to Bretons.

Louis was attracted by Anne's beauty and grace, and thought that so bright a jewel as Brittany ought not to have been lost to the crown of France. There was, however, a difficulty. Louis was married to Jeanne of France; moreover, he had been married for twenty-four years. The difficulty was got over in the good old fifteenth-century manner. Louis squared the authorities and asked for a divorce.

He had conscientious scruples about the legality of the marriage, he said. A mock trial was held before three papal commissioners. Louis swore that he had been forced into the marriage against his will. By December the marriage was declared null and void; the decree was brought to the King by the Pope's son, Cesare Borgia, who thereupon received a Dukedom and a noble pension.

Nine months after the death of Charles, Anne married Louis XII., and became for the second time Queen of France. This time she played a part in all official business, and managed Brittany without interference from Louis.

Her marriage appears to have been a happy one, except that from the moment their little daughter Claude was a few months old they disagreed as to whom she ought to marry. And later, it was a great grief to Anne when Louis took up arms against the Pope Julius. Anne would not let the Breton Church take any part in

QUEEN ANNE'S HOUSE AT MORLAIX. *Page* 107.

the Council of Pisa which had dared to cite the Pope to appear. She endeavoured to expiate her husband's heresy by pilgrimages and other pious practices. She tried to convert the Jews, and gave pensions to those who listened to her and expelled those who would not, embroidered ecclesiastical garments, and commissioned artist-monks to paint missals. She paid frequent visits to holy relics, praying for Louis' salvation, and returned to tell him of it, begging him to submit to the Pope. He kept his temper for a long time, but one day he lost it, and told her that women had no voice in the affairs of the Church. Anne never succeeded in patching up Louis' quarrel with Julius, but when the next Pope proposed an amicable agreement (Louis having forbidden all money to be sent to Rome), she supported it so strongly that Louis gave in and was reconciled with the Head of the Church.

In 1510 the Queen died, and the funeral ceremonies lasted fifteen days. Her body was buried in Paris, but her heart was buried at Nantes in her beloved Brittany.

There are traces of her all over Brittany, especially in Dinan, where her castle is now a museum, and where the bell-tower records her gift. Her home at Morlaix shows the narrowness of space and the beauty of decoration and carving of houses of her time. It also shows the little

respect in which ventilation was held, for the court in which her guard slept was in the centre of a winding house and had no outside windows!

She hated England, and spent much of her wealth in building ships to protect her shores against the attacks of English freebooters. Scotland she loved, and it is said that the ring found on James's finger after the Battle of Flodden is the one Anne sent him when she called him her knight and begged him to strike a blow against England for her sake.

CHAPTER XVI

MONT ST. MICHEL

TERRITORIALLY, Mont St. Michel is in Normandy; practically, for the traveller it is in Brittany, and through the centuries it has been a rock of dispute between the two. As though to stamp its present ownership every little shop and café abounds with Rouen ware, though a concession is made to the island's sometime possessor in the shape of decorative representations of Breton peasants in blue and yellow.

The road to it is long and flat, as the roads in these parts always are, with here and there a straight mile or two of regularly planted trees. Each tree is exactly like his brother—a long branchless trunk, with a bushy tuft on the top, like the flora of a Noah's Ark. Here and there along the route a touching advertisement appears to the effect that Poulard *aîné* and Poulard *jeune* are reunited, and one pictures the two rival hotel-keepers celebrating with omelette and cider a new-formed agreement. But the little churchyard on the Mount dispels this illusion. Poulard *jeune* rests

there under a cross unadorned—and the only one unadorned—with floral beads. And the only reunion is due to a company which bought up both. The omelettes of the Mère Poulard, to whom the hotels are dedicated, may be a memory, but are not a fact. The Poulard Hôtels, with their green, red and other *dépendance*, are often considered as the only hotels in the place; but if you care to search, you will find a few quaint little inns in the Grand Rue, which will give you a room aloft, and serve you an excellent *déjeuner* while you gaze across the sands. You cannot actually drive into Mont St. Michel, unless you arrive when the tide is out and take to the sands. The causeway leads up to the wall, and thence a wooden footbridge leads to the King's Gate—no! not quite to the gate—for the visitor, walking cheerfully along the wooden planks at high tide, sees six feet of water between himself and dry land. From the Hôtel Poulard, Jean and Jacques descend to cope with the difficulty, and wade about in picturesque attire, conversing in friendly rivalry with François from the Croix Blanche. Every few minutes car and carriage deposit their occupants at the footbridge, and find the rival backs of Jean and François waiting to carry them across the watery gulf. A priest descending from his bicycle keeps his cassock fixed up with safety-pins until he is within the gate; a lady of massive

MONT ST. MICHEL FROM THE SANDS. *Page* 109.

proportions announces that she will spend the night there; but an extra effort on the part of Jean furnishes sufficient supporting force, and she enjoys the hospitality of the Poulard instead.

A mark on the wall shows how once the water was six feet high within the gate and a boat could row up the street. Landing at certain times in September is still always difficult, for the water at the spring-tides reaches up as far as the English cannons which the inhabitants of the Mount have guarded since 1425.

Wherever you go you will be confronted with steps; the little streets, hardly wider than alleys, mount upwards and always develop into flights of steps. Nowhere is a house to be found with a wide flight of stairs, square feet on this crowded site being too valuable. You can enter the Croix Blanche in the Grand Rue, and wind upwards by a very spiral staircase, till you come to the dining-room on the second floor opening on to the ramparts, or at the shop next door you may buy china downstairs and "objets de piété" above—in fact, you may sip your tea or buy your postcards as well on the old fortifications as in the Rue below.

From the ramparts you can watch the arrival of other visitors who have chosen to race across the sands from Avranches behind the retreating tide. The venture is not without its perils, for here and there are quicksands which frequently

change their place. So a barefooted guide runs ahead of the first cart and, with trained eye and sensitive sole, detects and avoids the areas where dangers lurk. The footprints of himself and his dog, who knows the way as well as he does, are scrupulously followed by the driver of each cart, and a straggling cavalcade marks out a regular track across the five miles of sand which lie between the Norman town and the sometime island. In days of old before the modern digue was built with its iron rails, the drive across the sands was the route from east and west and south, and those whose horses stumbled too often, or refused to cross the rivers in the sand, paid for their delay with their lives to the incoming tide, and thus earned for the Patron Archangel the name of "St. Michel au Péril de la Mer."

The reclaiming of some of the shore on the mainland is jeopardizing the future of Mont St. Michel as an island, but it is still fascinating to watch the eager return of the sea over twelve kilometres of shining sand. It appears on the horizon to the north and its incoming is shown by the turned water of the River Couesnou. Then is the time to saunter from the Barbican of the Abbey along the top of the Petit Bois until one overlooks the little Chapelle of St. Aubert.

Soon the incoming sea laps the foundations of the little chapel, which an hour before could be

reached on foot by a short walk round the west shore. The path was a trifle "accidenté" with its big boulders and its rough-hewn steps, but conveyed no suggestion that its existence was only periodic. Now, however, the rising waves cut it off from approach, and the chapel is left as a lonely outpost in the sea. The Petit Bois, all that remains of the once huge forest of Soissy, is now at the water's edge, and the rock of Tombelaine, which could be reached by the sands a few hours earlier, stands as an island a couple of miles away. Round rushes the sea past the Tour Nord, and on to the Grosse Tour where the little wood ends. A little boat has been moored there; it feels a slight movement; a moment more and it tries to follow a retreating wave only to be hit back by another. In three minutes it has ceased to grind the pebbles, but has set itself broadside to the waves upon which it rolls and rocks. The little stream at the foot of the ramparts has now become a rushing river, whose swirling surface can be quaintly watched through the machicolations of the old bastion towers.

In a short time more Mont St. Michel is—save for the modern digue—a rocky island, and the sea stretches up to the mainland almost as it did twelve centuries ago, when the monks, returning from Rome, found for the first time the sea between them and their hermitage.

The story runs that a certain good man named Aubert, Bishop of Avranches, dreamed of St. Michael, and was commanded by the Archangel to build him a chapel on the rocky spot called Mont Tombe in the midst of the great Forest of Soissy. The building of the chapel was helped by miracles. Rocks had to be dislodged, and when one was sufficiently obstinate to resist all efforts Aubert fetched a little baby, who knocked the stone away with his little bare foot, so that it rolled down the Mount. Upon that stone in later years the little chapel which bears his name was erected to the canonized St. Aubert.

St. Michael's Chapel built, relics must be fetched, and so a small deputation set off for Rome. While they were away a great storm arose, and the wind, blowing from the north at high tide, the whole of the huge forest was engulfed, except the heights of Mont Tombe and Tombelaine.

Little wonder that the monks were filled with fear and attributed their own safety to the miraculous power of the relics when they at last reached their rocky home!

In due course the fame of miracles at the Mount spread far and wide. The Chapel of St. Michael developed into an Abbey, and its monks grew in number. Pilgrims thronged to the wonderful spot, some of them wealthy and some even royal.

Money came fast, so that each Abbot added something to his heritage of stone. Towers, pinnacles, and spires reared their proud heads nearer to the skies, often to meet destruction by lightning or by fire.

The Abbey Nave rivalled that of the Cathedral at Dol; the monks met in a hall fit for Kings. Treasure and books accumulated, and needed men to guard them. Thick walls and barbicans grew up to protect the Abbey on the south, the steep rock was hewn to guard it on the north. Sheer up from this hewn rock there arose in the thirteenth century a palace of stone, so wonderful in its strength and beauty, that it has received the name of the "Merveille," and caused Mont St. Michel to be known as the "Marvel of the West." The magnificence of its six halls was such that Louis VI. chose one of them in which to institute a new order of knighthood, after which the "Salle des Chevaliers" has since been called.

The great Abbey, like all other stone monuments which have lived through many centuries, has its dark corners as well as its open courts. Its dungeons are full of memories of men tortured and killed to satisfy the cruel passions of their captors. One man had committed the single crime of being an artist craftsman. He was taken and imprisoned that his art should beautify

the Abbey, that his fingers should carve cunning tracery on capital and arch.

In spite of siege, tempest, and fire, the wondrous Abbey of St. Michael stands as a monument of the skill of man, its majesty a fitting crown to the rock on which it rests.

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